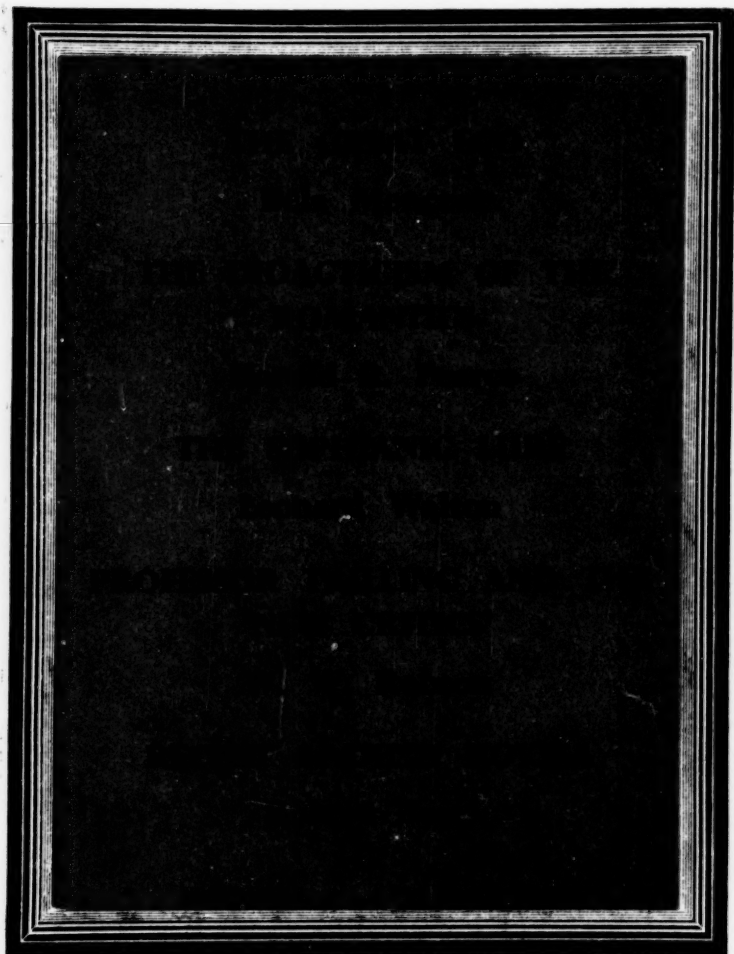


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# THE GREAT EGO

## A Study of the German Romantics

By BÉLA MENCZER

### I

THE German puzzle remains unsolved. We have even lost sight of its origin. Reluctant victors who never wanted to be conquerors do not yet fully understand how they became involved in the quarrel of the century. Germany has deceived the world and, worse still, she has deceived herself. Perhaps this formula best sums up the great lesson of the two world wars which have changed the face of the earth: the lesson of the ruins beneath which Germany, as we knew her or as we thought we knew her, lies buried, awaiting a resurgence under some new form which we do not know, and for which the Germans do not even care much.

Many Germans tried to convince us, and themselves also, that Germany was a country of practical-minded and methodical specialists in every branch of knowledge. The truth was that Germany was also a land of dreamers, full of suppressed desires and savage instincts. Almost a century before Freud talked about 'suppression' and 'repression' in psychology, Hoffmann believed in 'a secret life', in 'split personality', in the 'double life', and in dreams as the more genuine manifestations of personality than conscious and rational expression.

We believed that the Germans were the most energetic, war-like and conquering nation, with a genius for organization, because some of them proclaimed from the roof-tops that they were so, and even convinced some people by their deeds. The truth is rather that, of all the nations of Europe, the Germans are most inclined to apathy, lethargy and melancholy. Eugene of Savoy, who knew them well, and who commanded many of their mercenaries in battle, could not understand 'how a nation potentially so strong can bear with such phlegmatic patience the sufferings and the devastation of wars made by others on its own soil'.

We believed that Germany had discarded her mysticism with Luther, whom Carlyle and other Victorians hailed as the hero of Progress, of Reason and of Liberty. The truth is rather that Luther, with his impulsive and unbalanced temperament, believed literally in the existence of demons, in the personal apparitions of Satan; he believed, too, that original sin had deprived men both of their capacity for correct reasoning and of their right to Liberty. Indeed he advised his protectors, the Princes, to kill more and more of their subjects who claimed rights and liberties and even simple justice.

We believed that the Germans were a most sober and orderly race. This was to some extent true, but it is also true that Tacitus already knew them to be drunkards, and at their best the Germans have been the poets of lyrical exuberance since they first wrote in their language, and their strength, like their weakness, has lain in a tendency to uncritical enthusiasm.

Germany had the reputation of being learned. Melancthon taught her Greek, it is true, and ever since the time of that *Praeceptor Germaniae* her Hellenist scholars have pored over Greek texts with an almost ascetic gravity. It is more to the point that Germany studied Greek with enthusiasm because mythology appealed to her, whereas the problems inherited from Latin literature were much too rational. Zacarias Werner, Hoffmann's companion, fellow-poet and fellow-Prussian from Koenigsberg, took his first step towards the Church (some years before he donned the Redemptorist habit) when he came to the conclusion that dramatic art could no longer find any inspiration in Greek mythology; nor was Indian mythology more satisfying and was not yet fully explored; while the Nordic, German and Slavonic mythology which he brought on to the stage in *Queen Wanda of Sarmatia* was much too obscure. 'Catholic mythology' alone was thus left open to the artist.

We liked to think that the Germans were a systematic nation. For over a hundred years they filled the world with their systems, astonished all by the success of some of them, puzzled most with the solidity and rigidity of these systems in philosophy and science, eventually, alas, in politics, and 'the continuation of politics by other means', as a Prussian General put it. It is also true that they embraced these systems with enthusiasm because they believed that they had obtained them by some sublime and secret inspiration, diabolical or divine, but in either case supernatural. The

greatest German drama is still Goethe's *Faust* and for several generations their philosophers described their time as 'the Faustian age'.

Long before the Germans mystified other nations they mystified themselves. Their scholars deciphered Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions, but Goethe warned them about 'the Babylon in our hearts'; and ever since his time the central endeavour of German art has been the deciphering of the Babylon of the human, and especially the German heart.

Kierkegaard says in *Either-Or* that for him and for the whole generation which in his time followed the German philosophers (whom Kierkegaard tried to 'overcome vitally' instead of 'refuting rationally') two tales were symbolical of the modern man: the German tale of Doctor Faustus and the Spanish tale of Don Juan. The first is a story about knowledge, the second of sensual pleasure through power given by the Devil. Both tales were revived in Germany in the last phase of the eighteenth century, when Western thought tried to relegate God to an abstract, impersonal plane, and offered to eliminate the Devil by way of compensation, as a superstition of less enlightened ages. Goethe rehabilitated both Faust and Don Juan. Shortly before him, Mozart's Don Juan had sunk into Hell, so that the story of the great sinner still ended with a just retribution. In *Werther*, in *Elective Affinities*, in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, but above all in *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe claimed that sensual passion, even sinful passion, was the noblest thing on earth, and later still he allowed Faust to be redeemed by love. With a good pagan optimism, Goethe did not resist the Devil and all his works; he ruled them out. His was an elegant, cynical, witty Devil, not the ugly and terrifying one in Dürer's pictures, nor the monumental orator of Milton. In common with the whole of his generation, Goethe believed in the moral progress of mankind. Like them he was rudely awakened by the French Revolution, which men of a similar outlook—Burke in England, Friedrich-Leopold zu Stolberg, Friedrich von Gentz, and even young Metternich in Germany—disliked, not because it claimed to establish Progress and Liberty, but because in their view it retarded true progress and liberty. Brought up outside any Catholic tradition, Goethe and some other Germans of his generation adopted Voltaire's aesthetics and did not imitate his campaign against the Church, which a non-Catholic could not in any case fully understand.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, German letters and erudition were European rather than German. Their greatest man, Leibniz, wrote in French and in Latin, while other writers used the German language without dealing with any specific German problem. Lessing said that of all the virtues of Antiquity, Patriotism was the one he could least understand, and which he never tried to acquire. Voltaire's aesthetic standards were purely technical and the early Goethe is a Voltarian in this sense only, but much of what he wrote even in his early period was not Voltairian in form.

The Romantic movement was to some extent a reaction against Goethe; at the same time, however, it sought to interpret him and to propagate his art as a new model. The coinage 'Romanticism' is due to Friedrich von Schlegel. He saw the creator of new forms in Goethe, not the past master of accepted ones. When he analysed *Werther* and *Wilhelm Meister* he postulated a new literary genre, the *Romanpoesie*. The great novels of world literature had hitherto been mainly stories. Schlegel was the first to see that the plot of a novel was of secondary consideration. In his view, the novel should primarily be a secret, or at least a discreetly hidden, autobiography. It is poetry in prose. Before Schlegel coined *Romanpoesie*, which was later divided into substantive and adjective and became *romantische Poesie*, the value of the novel and even of drama lay in its objective content and in its form. Schlegel looked upon a work of art as the expression of the author's ego and his subjective realization of himself. While France in the last years of the eighteenth century made a political revolution, and tried to replace all personal power by the rule of abstract principles, Germany made a literary and intellectual revolution in exactly the opposite sense. The less spectacular German Revolution had possibly more profound and lasting effects, although it was probably no better in its results. It proclaimed that the first principle of art and of science was personality, the subjective presentation of reality, the subjective inner light.

The French Revolution is now a fading memory. Fragments of its principles are still inherent in the political institutions of most European countries, and a certain weakness and instability which the Revolution brought about in France is still present in the French state. Yet constitutional changes, ideal constitutions and legislation by 'the people's will' have now lost their visionary

glamour. The French revolutionary mystique has receded to such a point that even in the case of political revolutionaries of our own generation we are interested primarily in the subjective motive, in the passion which leads them to action. Most of the literature which has arisen out of the tremendous changes which Europe has seen in the last four decades are explanations of motives and apologies for illusion and disillusion. We seem to be less and less concerned with the objective value of ideas. Books now written on the state, the law, and society hardly deal with these conceptions, but rather are they speculations on 'the needs of the time', on subjective 'psychological' needs of our contemporaries.

In the intellectual and aesthetic field there are few works of criticism which take as their criterion (as Voltaire still did) an aesthetic law laid down by authority. The art critic is preoccupied not with painting but with Picasso; the literary man enquires into the complexities of the 'inner self' of Gide, or Proust, or Valéry, not into the rules governing the novel or poetry. Even the historian is often considered more important than his period, so that biography has become the popular form of historical writing. Christopher Marlowe wrote a *Doctor Faustus* and Molière wrote a *Don Juan*, but the authors took second place to their heroes until Goethe wrote his *Faust* and Mozart composed *Don Giovanni*. Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Othello, were much too interesting in themselves to leave room for interest in Shakespeare's personal life, which thus remained a mystery, Don Quixote was infinitely better known than Cervantes. Since the time of Schlegel and the young German Romantics, interest has shifted from the work to the author. In other words, German Romanticism, for which the way had been prepared by Fichte's philosophy of the 'Great Ego', was a more profound and more lasting revolution than the French one, whose contemporary it was. This subjective philosophy of the Great Ego, transcending all objective truth, is still present in all the intellectual and artistic manifestations of our age.

The Frenchmen of the last decade of the eighteenth century were confessed revolutionaries whose names filled their contemporaries with horror, and which still live in our memories as synonymous with revolution. But history likes paradoxes. The Germans of the same decade were defenders of tradition: Schlegel, Novalis, Jean-Paul Richter, Werner and Hoffmann were conservatives, politically speaking, men devoted to their Kings and Princes (as was Goethe himself) and 'reactionaries' in their attitude

towards the French Revolution, despite some initial sympathy, and they were anti-revolutionary even before some of them entered the Church. Yet the political revolutionaries of Paris were the last representatives of traditional taste and style. Their political tracts (mostly second-rate and lacking in originality) were imitations of Aristotelian treatises and Platonic dialogues. Their architecture was still full of Greek colonnades, their rhetoric was full of Ciceronian echoes, their very revolutionary pseudonyms were Greek and Roman, and their rhyming dramas were neo-classical. On the other bank of the Rhine, however, the defenders of tradition and the enemies of revolution reversed all established standards of taste, tradition and judgement, all sense of intellectual and artistic proportion. For good or for evil, this reversal of form still dominates the literary scene, and even the political thought of today. Thus, the political and social thinker of the present generation is unconsciously a Romantic, for he is more interested in the 'mystique' underlying a political or social upheaval than in the institutions which have been upset, and the new ones which are being brought into existence. The chief actors in the political drama of the recent past were in a certain sense Romantics, with their belief in a subjective mystique. They were not concerned with questions of right or wrong, with the diseases in the body politic which needed curing. They looked at politics from the outside, like the Romantics, but for the most part without the sympathy of the true Romantics. They tried to construct a world of their own, to adjust it to their imagination; they made their nation a projection of the great Ego of their own inspired personality. The brilliant brothers August-Wilhelm and Friedrich von Schlegel, the learned, profound and witty Jean-Paul Richter, the licentious and emotional dreamers Hoffmann and Werner, the noble-minded and lyrical Novalis, Ludwig Tieck and Clemens Brentano and the philosopher Fichte, who gave to all of them the theme of the great Ego which they embroiled in their various styles—all of them would no doubt be horrified could they see to what their ideas have given birth. Every Revolution is a Chronos, a Time-god devouring its children, even such revolutions which are inspired by tradition. They built Athens and Rome in Paris, Jerusalem in England, ancestral Slav Communism in Russia, a Roman Empire in modern Italy, Valhalla in the Bavarian Alps in the twentieth century. All Utopias have an element of retrospection. The German Romantics were devoured by the Revolu-

tion they began. None of them lost his head and many of them saved their souls in Rome: Friedrich von Schlegel and Clemens Brentano died after years of apostolic work; Novalis died with sincere religious fervour, and Zacharias Werner, poet of freemasonry and author of an ambitious drama on Luther, died a Redemptorist preacher. Yet the Revolution they made devoured them, for they were forgotten and relegated to obscurity.

They now begin to emerge from this obscurity as interest is revived in Hoffmann, whose Tales have appeared in a new English translation, and who has recently appeared on the English screen to the accompaniment of Offenbach's delightful music; Mr. Martin Cooper has lately claimed him as the master of many and greater authors.<sup>1</sup> When, at the end of the year, the second centenary of the birth of St. Clement Hofbauer is celebrated, much will be said about this apostle of German literature and the arts, who himself wrote almost nothing apart from a few sermons and reports to his Vicar-General in Rome. St. Celment's flock, however, comprised Friedrich von Schlegel and his wife Dorothea (the daughter of the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelsohn); the Swedish painter of the Romantic school Klinkowström; the religious painters Johann and Philip Veit (Dorothea von Schlegel's sons by her first, Israelite, marriage); the Jewish Dr. Emmanuel Veith, who, like Faust himself, acquired a degree at every Faculty, and his last in Catholic theology as a priest; and finally Zacharias Werner, to whose beatification there were to be many obstacles, among which was the fact that to the C.S.S.R. after his name he added, during the ten years of his priestly life, honorary titles received from Protestant Kings for his pre-conversion literary merits.

## II

The last chapter of Walter Pater's *Renaissance* deals with Winckelmann, the last humanist of the Renaissance. A book on the German Romantics might well start with Winckelmann, their precursor. It was Winckelmann's *The Art of Antiquity* which led Goethe to Italy. Henri Beyle chose the name 'Stendhal' in honour

<sup>1</sup> Victor Hugo's Quasimodo is, e.g., a Hoffmannesque figure. We also know that the *Doppelgänger* inspired Dostoevsky with the theme of the 'split personality' and that *la vie double* was a favourite concept of Balzac.—Talk by Mr. Martin Cooper broadcast in the Third Programme, 5 June, 1951.

of the author of *The Art of Antiquity*, who was born in 1717 in Stendhal, in Brandenburg, a subject of the coarse and brutal Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia (father of Frederick the Great). Count Friedrich-Leopold zu Stolberg, the young Goethe's companion, translator of Homer and—after his conversion—author of the great *History of the Religion of Jesus Christ*, took Winckelmann's books as a guide during his Italian journeys. Friedrich von Schlegel learned how to appreciate Greek art from Winckelmann, and added his own romantic theories to the subject.

Winckelmann became a convert in 1749 at a time when religion was considered unfashionable amongst men of letters. Goethe, who owed him so much, found it difficult to believe in the sincerity of this conversion, and in a biographical essay which he devoted to the great archaeologist he does not hesitate to attribute it to the lowest motives: to curry favour with Cardinals who had sponsored his excavations in Italy, and with the King of Poland, Elector of Saxony, in whose libraries and collections Winckelmann had a modest job before his Italian excavations made him world famous. In the middle of the eighteenth century, interest in theology was at its lowest ebb. The times, however, were far from atheistic. The rival influence to Voltaire was still a strong religiosity all over Europe, with mystical inclinations in both Catholic nations, which had a touch of Jansenism about them, and the Protestant nations, where the rigours of the Pietists and the queer revelations of the Rose Cross of Swedenborg were current. Winckelmann was, however, the first of the Germans to make a religious approach on the cultural and historical plane. He not only unearthed the ruins of Roman antiquity; he rediscovered old theories which Aristotle had put into his *Politics*: the savage but free barbarism of the North, the religion and art of the enslaved South, and the perfect harmony between Nordic freedom and Southern religiosity and art which is to be found in the Middle Zone, the Mediterranean world.

For Winckelmann, and for Goethe and Stolberg in the next generation, Italy was the land of proportion and harmony, the land of the great synthesis, just as Greece had been for Aristotle. It was a search for the middle of the world, for the centre of world history, which drew the German imagination to the Mediterranean. The North is barbaric and its very breath over the South means the destruction of all beauty. A poem of Schiller expresses this thought in 1788:

*Alle jene Blüten sind gefallen  
Von des Nordens schauerlichem Wehn,  
Einen zu bereichern unter allen,  
Musste diese Götterwelt vergehen*

—in favour of one God have all the other gods of an enchanting world fallen. This sounds like pagan nostalgia for a polytheistic world harmony, and very likely it was. Yet Schiller was the master whom the Romantics attacked more than any other, although their leading dramatist, Zacharias Werner, admitted that he owed all his stage technique to the author of *Mary Stuart* and *Wallenstein*. Schiller—and Goethe, too—looked for the many ancient gods beneath the blue Mediterranean sky. But Stolberg, already years before his conversion, wanted to see something else when, amidst the European earthquake caused by the French Revolution, he crossed the Alps for the first time in 1791:

I hope soon to stand on the shores of the Mediterranean, this sea whose waves have so often washed Italy, Sicily, the ruins of Carthage and the havens of Greece. . . . Here while I stand the island of the Archipelago will rise to remembrance, with mystic Egypt and the sacred children of Israel, the people who in their history and by their prophets first foretold the coming of the son of truth and love. He whose pure spirit, not limited by Alps and seas, spreading from the Ganges to the Frozen Ocean, enlightens the sons of men.<sup>1</sup>

While forms were so strict in every respect in that European era which followed upon the religious wars of the seventeenth century; while conventions were so solidly established; religion so fully regulated by the state; functions in state and society so well designed for everyone; and geographical boundaries of the local sovereignties were so clearly defined, mysticism and passion took refuge in hidden places, from where, in a secret way and by mysterious methods, they tried to dominate the scene, and in fact often succeeded. Hoffmann's Tale of *Klein-Zach* is the symbolical story of such a secret government by magic, which sometimes serves the well-meaning reforms projected by the Prince, but makes the enlightened Prince a prisoner until he is liberated from the influence of powerful magicians. Perhaps this is a story of the Emperor Joseph II, with a happier ending than reality gave it.

<sup>1</sup> A contemporary English translation of *The Travels Through Switzerland and Italy of Count Stolberg*, published in London in 1796.

Hoffmann, who out of devotion to Mozart added the Christian name Amadeus to his own names of Ernst Theodor, thus becoming the almost legendary 'E.T.A.', wrote prose variations of Mozart's themes: *The Magic Flute*, with its secret powers ruling a realm by mysterious means, the betrayal of which means a damnation worse than death, and *Don Giovanni*, or the pleasure acquired through power given by the Devil to possess women. Secret societies flourished all over Germany in the eighteenth century, in the splendid Vienna of Joseph II, in the learned Berlin of the great Frederick, in the gay Dresden of August of Poland. Royal Princes, powerful Ministers, eminent scholars and artists took part in these leagues which, unlike the philosophical sects of ancient Greece, did not break openly with the conventions of social life, and unlike the hermit communities of the Dark and Middle Ages, did not withdraw from the world. On the contrary, these leagues tried to govern the world from a hidden corner, and in a disguise.

Both Hoffmann and Zacharias Werner led the double life of the secret societies of the time. Their home town was Koenigsberg, the city of Emmanuel Kant and capital of the rational enlightenment taught by this philosopher. They gave their secret allegiance to an order of modern Templars which was powerful in Poland, where the two poets served as Prussian civil servants in the last few years of the century. The corrupt court of the shadow King Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski was composed of secret societies and Rose Cross men; Templars, and free-masons of a Polish variety, furnished tools to Russia, Prussia and later to Napoleon under a régime of partition and war. They quarrelled much among themselves, but all combined to fight the apostle of Warsaw and later of Vienna, St. Clement Hofbauer, the Christian scandal of the age.

We shall perhaps never know exactly what made Hoffmann and Werner feel so unhappy in Prussian-dominated Warsaw. Was it a spiritual nostalgia awakened in them by their first contact with a Catholic people, the first sound of that great call which the 'German Fathers'—as the Poles called the companions of St. Clement—made even Prussian ears hear? Was it the classic and cosmopolitan taste which still prevailed in Poland, where the German emotional-Romantic reaction to cold imitation-Hellenism had not yet penetrated? Though many of Hoffmann's and Werner's letters from Warsaw have been preserved, no full light has been

thrown on these questions. We do know, however, that after his years in Warsaw, Hoffmann's *Tales* increased in number and that they all contain a strong 'No' to magic and secret societies. In his love stories Hoffmann becomes the opposite of Don Juan. He loses the women he loved because he said 'No' to the Devil, but his tears redeem him. In his dialogues of *The Confraternity of St. Serapion*<sup>1</sup> one of the speakers—once more his friend Zacharias Werner—correctly argues a full theological case against the Quietism of Molinos: non-resistance to the Devil.

Zacharias Werner's dramatic poetry provides more light than Hoffmann's work. *The Sons of the Valley* is the story of Mediterranean light in its struggle against Nordic darkness. It tells of the Knights of the Temple in a valley of the Holy Land. To quote his own words, taken from a letter to Countess Brühl, dated 15 May, 1808:

I imagined a society of the wise men and the heroes of mankind, founded to strengthen good and to fight evil all over the earth, although in a different form. On the banks of the Seine, they are Carmelite monks, on the river Ganges they are Brahmins. But there is a centre—a *point de ralliement*—a Mediator, present in all religions and sects, although in a more or less distorted form. The most divine expression of this idea of a Centre or Mediator is expressed in Christ, but the idea already flourishes in the figure of Krishna among the Hindus, of Horus among the Egyptians, and is kindled into flame in the Jewish Messiah.

The fraternity in the valley, however, breaks up. Not through the intrigues of their enemies, but because they have sons, and no fraternity can last when the interests of the sons appear, to make the fathers selfish. Egoism is the great enemy. Yet the invisible founder of the fraternity of the Valley destroys the form only, preserving the essence. The light of the Centre is not extinguished, and fragments of the great Fraternity of the Valley of Light travel as far as the dark 'northern steppes of Sarmatia' and the distant cold isles of Scotland. Fragments of the Light penetrate to every corner of the world from the sunny central valley—the Mediterranean.

In his play on Luther, *The Consecration of Power*, Zacharias Werner presented a not very Lutheran version of the Reformation,

<sup>1</sup> Thus called because the first meeting of the confraternity took place in 1808, on the Feast of St. Serapion, according to the calendar. Neither Hoffmann nor any of his drunken poet and musician companions ever bothered to ascertain the identity of this Saint.

and possibly the Protestant Kings who bestowed honours on this bard of the Doctor of Wittenberg did so under a misapprehension. Werner's Luther is not in the first place an enemy of the Pope, not even of the Indulgences of the Dominican Tetzl. His merit lay in the fact that he could bring to an end the Revolution which he provoked and led. The destroyers of images in cathedrals ask him to lead them in their campaign to establish the rule of God through the Spirit alone. But Luther refuses a merely rational religion, just as he refuses a purely spiritual one, and has the courage to face unpopularity. God has spoken in symbols and in images. God speaks through the strength of the word, but the time has not yet come when men can understand the word alone. Man needs the image, the symbol, the form, and Luther knows it. One step further on the road of Reason would plunge men into darkness, and thus Luther holds his followers back. After he had become a priest, Werner disavowed this version of Luther's story and withdrew the play from further public performance, which—only five years before the author's conversion in Rome in 1812—had been the greatest success of the Berlin stage. The Aulic Chancery of the King of Prussia defended it officially, for the sake of Luther, not of Werner, against the disrespectful criticism of Voss, fellow-translator with Stolberg of Homer, and later author of a venomous pamphlet against the convert Romantics, his former friends Stolberg and Schlegel.

Throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Germany, or at least German literature, was searching for its lost and wandering soul. Winckelmann's idea of 'immobile beauty'<sup>1</sup> in the

<sup>1</sup> The last echo of this concept of Winckelmann is perhaps to be found in Baudelaire's *Spleen et Idéal*. More subtle and more sophisticated than the German Romantics of 1800 or so, and the French Romantics who followed them a generation later, Baudelaire is full of the Romantic motive of the wandering soul, the search for a light over the seas, the mirage of the South and the East. In *La Beauté* Baudelaire gives the best summary of that ideal of immobile beauty which disciples of Winckelmann found in Greek and Italian art:

*Je trône dans l'azur comme un sphinx incompris ;  
J'unis un cœur de neige à la blancheur des cygnes ;  
Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes,  
Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris.*

*Les poètes devant mes grandes attitudes,*

*Consumeront leurs jours en d'austères études ;*

*Car j'ai, pour fasciner ces dociles amants  
De purs miroirs qui font toutes choses plus belles ;  
Mes yeux, mes larges yeux aux clartés éternelles !*

perfect unity of idea and form, has left its mark also in other literatures; in Germany itself, Hölderlin's *Hyperion* in 1799 is the story of a modern Greek hero who fought the Turks and is exiled amongst the 'Barbarians of the North', who know many crafts and sciences, but who do not see the Unity of all beauty and knowledge; barbarians who pursue the road of progress, but do not see the object of their progress, nor feel the immobile beauty of the Eternal. Twenty-two years before the rising which brought Byron to Greece, Hölderlin invented his Greek upheaval, but he was less concerned with the Ottoman rule over the Greeks than with the unhellenic, unaesthetic, utilitarian mind of 'Progress' in the North, a German monster which he sensed but which became all-pervading only a century later under Wilhelm II.

A more humorous and ironical comment on the same subject is Adelbert Chamisso's *Peter Schlemil*. This son of a French Royalist noble family, which had been transplanted to Prussia when he was a child, divided his time between service in the Prussian army, exotic travelling and drinking-parties at Berlin in the company of Hoffmann and Werner, concerts at the country-house of the Prince Charming of the Romantics, the poet and musician Louis-Ferdinand of Prussia, who fell in the war of 1806. Chamisso's Peter Schlemil is a man who loses his shadow, huge when he is in the North, as he approaches the sun. He is obviously chasing his own shadow, the 'Great Ego' of Fichte, and never, throughout all his adventures in many lands, can he find it again. For a long time, the Nordic man, a wanderer towards some unknown mirage of a central Light, is a theme of Nordic literature.

It is the symbol in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*—Ibsen, whom the greatest literary misunderstanding of modern times has made into a naturalistic and progressive social critic, but who was nevertheless a poet of symbolical fairy tales from the North, and a soul longing for Rome, to the point that he commented on the loss of the Pope's temporal power in 1870 in these words: 'Rome, too, has been taken from us and given to the politicians. Nothing will henceforth belong to the Spirit alone.' The Northern nomad soul in search of Southern Light is Strindberg's explanation of the migrations of peoples, the theme of his *Swedish Destinies* and of his

'*Je hais les mouvements qui déplace les lignes*' is Winckelmann's ideal of immobile beauty, and also Goethe's in the *Roman Elegies* of his Italian journey. The poets consuming their lives in austere studies are men like Stolberg and Schlegel; the 'pure mirror making all things more beautiful' is, in more concise form, the thought Fichte and Schlegel express in their concept of the 'Great Ego'.

cycle of Swedish royal dramas. Strindberg, too, has only been called a naturalistic and scientific psychologist through a misapprehension; he was in reality a Romantic, an eschatological interpreter of womanhood, with a technique borrowed from the fashionable Naturalism of his generation. Above all he was a poet in the sense of the German Romantics, a prophet disclosing the innermost secrets in symbols taken from history and from a discreetly disguised personal life-story.

The full meaning of the 'Great Ego' was discovered by a man of the North, Kierkegaard. God alone can define Himself by 'I am who I am' and the Ego of man is but a reflexion of a transcendent Central Ego. The conclusion to which Kierkegaard came from a purely contemplative introspection was seen in retrospection by the German Romantics through symbols, stories, tales, a vision of history, through a symbolical interpretation of geography even. The Centre of Life appeared in a Body where the earth has its centre, 'the great valley' over which He shone, was the sea touching upon Italy, Greece, Egypt and Israel. The soul of the peoples longs for this centre, this Light, this Form containing the idea of God, which appears in fragments in German cathedrals in the North and the West, and is in a state of preparation in the Far East (to which a great deal of study was given in the eighteenth century). Friedrich von Schlegel's *Philosophy of History* is a long meditation on recurring symbols in the memory, the thought and the art of mankind.

The message of the Romantic generation was the personal vision, the personal reaction to art and history. The untranslatable German terms *erleben* and *Erlebniss* are romantic coinages; they mean a full life in the imaginary world, a full psychic transposition into Antiquity or into the Middle Ages, in style, manners, costume (pre-Romantic drama and novel had cared for none of these things), an interpretation of the poetic world of the imagination, as seen through a temperament.

Romanticism began in Germany. Thanks to the French émigrés who came into contact with Germany in the course of their wanderings—Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël—its ideas spread. Its greatest monuments in poetry were found not in Germany but in England. Byron, Shelley, Blake, Sir Walter Scott, knowing little of the æsthetic upheaval caused by the German critics of the 1790s, put many of their ideas into practice and applied many of their concepts with a greater creative talent than

ever Schlegel, Brentano or Novalis possessed. It has often been argued that the Romantics bequeathed a neurotic egomania to European literature from which it may never be healed. It was the Romantics who made us devote so much attention to the self-centredness of the artist; it is since their time that we are inclined to consider morbid egotism as a symptom of genius, although of course there are cases where this is genuine, so that a man speaks of himself, but really means a thought, an idea, a unique poetic and artistic experience which is his. Romantic aesthetics unfortunately failed to give us a safe criterion by which we can recognize true originality and reject affectation and artificiality.

Devoured by its own sons as we have shown, this aesthetic Revolution yet had the merit of urging upon thinking men an alternative between the Ego and God, between the folly of the Ego and the ultimate mystical wisdom achieved through the reconciliation of the Ego with the love of God. Stolberg, Werner, Brentano, Novalis and their fellow-Romantics discerned a new way of conversion through artistic sensibility and humanist understanding. They have perhaps indicated a way and a vocation to their people, more adrift in the world today than they ever were before, even in the midst of the Napoleonic ordeal, which Germany may yet consider in the future. German spirituality was at its highest when German political power was at its lowest ebb; the only constructive political results which Germany has ever achieved were in combination with other peoples; with Italy in the framework of the Holy Roman Empire, with Romance peoples in the Swiss Confederation, with Slavs and Magyars in the Austrian Empire and with Walloons in the Netherlands. When German power is no longer feared, this longing of the German soul for a universality which the Romantics once expressed may still have a beneficial work to accomplish.

# THE DIDACTICISM OF THE ROMANTICS

By HAROLD R. PEARCE

A SPECTRE is haunting the critical fields of Europe; it is the spectre of Emmanuel Kant. His was the genius which not only dominated, both directly and indirectly, the lines of romantic thought, but also defined its peculiar quality—its, despite all appearances to the contrary, fundamental didacticism.

We must however emphasize from the beginning that his influence was only partially direct and not always in the line of philosophy. It is true that Coleridge both read and disseminated the speculations of Kant—‘(the sage of Koenigsburg) took possession of me as with a giants’ hand’—and also to a lesser extent those of Schelling, Fichte and Schiller. It is also true that Shelley had in his library a copy of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, but we are by no means certain that he read it. More important perhaps are the influences both by acceptance and rejection of Hume and Locke,<sup>1</sup> and, on the wider sociological plane, the works of the French reformers, the effect of scientific progress, and the decadent state of contemporary theology and practice of religion. The atmosphere of the age was against metaphysics and it was the accomplishment of Emmanuel Kant that he gave rational expression in its highest form to this *zeitgeist*.

Kant denied that we have any knowledge of reality through the mind, but, on the other hand, he said that we have an indubitable sense of moral obligation. Considering that art had some connexion with the mind, he allocated to it a mere subjective value. The romantics accepted his theory of knowledge but because they had an intuitive certainty that art deals with reality, that it looks ‘into the life of things’, they put it under the aegis of the will, of moral obligation. This is the mainspring of their

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Wordsworth and the Locke Tradition* in Basil Willey’s *The Seventeenth Century Background*, Chatto & Windus, 1934.

didacticism—it is precisely because they failed to appreciate the intellectual nature of the aesthetic experience that we find those awful tensions, those unresolved conflicts between mind and will, intuition and poetic theory, and, ultimately, the source of the embarrassing weaknesses which at times are so evident in their poetry.

No one would deny that poetry is not preaching, that didactic is not art; but when we try to discover the exact boundaries, difficulties and confusions at once arise. Part of the trouble in practice is that so many people, poets included, relegate the term didactic to the describing of ideas which for some reason they find unsatisfactory—bourgeois, conventional, or other seemingly relative concepts—and they never consider that the term is equally applicable to work which expounds the glories of revolution, proletarianism, 'nature', or what you will. Just because a poet overthrows reason and morals it does not seem to follow that therefore he stops moralizing. This particular confusion affected, it will be contended, the whole of the main romantic movement in England. The difference between art and didactic is not one of subject matter, for an Ode to Duty can be an extremely great poem, but of the *lumen sub quo*, of the angle from which we view that subject. The aim of the moralist is to discover the moral truth of his subject, that of the poet the aesthetic truth.

Jacques Maritain, following the schoolmen, divides the 'practical intellect' (as distinct from the 'speculative intellect') into the spheres of 'action' and 'making'. The sphere of 'action' is the sphere of human morality; its work consists in the free use of our faculties with regard to the end of man. Its object is the production of the good man. The sphere of 'making', on the other hand, consists in the free use of our faculties to producing some particular end distinct from our own. Thus, when a carpenter makes a table he is trying directly to make a good table, not to be a good man; indeed his state of soul will be irrelevant to the quality of the production. The sphere of 'making' is the sphere of art which consequently has an end, rules and habits which are not those of the man but of the work to be produced. Art is 'the undeviating determination of work to be done'. What is this end? Broadly we may say that the poet 'sees into the life of things', or, more strictly, he, with his greater sensibility, apprehends the beauty of the object. Now beauty, the philosophers tell us, is that which pleases when seen, *id quod visum placet*, and that which pleases the mind in the

last analysis is 'being'. In art this is embodied in the facets of 'integrity', 'proportion', and 'ontological clarity'.<sup>1</sup>

Our task is to apply the principle of this distinction to the work of the romantic poets. In so far as they left the line of 'making' and entered into the realm of human conduct, in so far as they departed from the pursuit of beauty, just so far they ceased to be poets and became didacticists. In applying this principle it will be useful to follow two aspects. First we shall examine the general aesthetic background, and where necessary the particular aesthetic theory of the poet, and from this deduce whether his work is likely to be didactic. Here we ought to remember Coleridge's 'In energetic minds truth soon changes by domestication into power and from directing in the discrimination and appraisal of the product becomes influence in the production.' Secondly, by an examination of the poet's technique, by a consideration of the internal coherence of the poetry itself, we can discover whether the work is the immediate direct poetic vision or whether alien elements have gone to its constitution.

Professor Lovejoy<sup>2</sup> pointed out that romanticism is not a single movement but that there are many 'romanticisms' which differ essentially; he distinguishes especially the German and French movements. The former see art as the expression of the whole civilized man with all his conventions and conceptualizations; the latter, expelling sophistication and society as undesirable accretions, seek reality in what they consider to be the pure and simple emotions of the noble savage. The German school were frankly didactic and exercised their influence in England through the medium of Coleridge. The French school condemned didactic, but because they understood by it merely an art which preaches a conventional morality, they themselves cannot avoid the charge of being didactic poets. Such, as we shall now attempt to prove, were Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley.

We often tend, under the influence of Beatty,<sup>3</sup> to dismiss too lightly Wordsworth's theory of art as obsolete psychology, and perhaps a further glance at the *Prelude*, taking especial note of the later books, will be well worth our while. We must not too hastily

<sup>1</sup> For a full and deep consideration of this definition one should consult Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Discrimination of Romanticisms* in 'Publications of the Modern Language Association of America' (P.M.L.A.), Vol. 39.

<sup>3</sup> A. Beatty, *Wordsworth, His Doctrine and Art in their Historical Relations* (Madison, 1927).

ascribe Wordsworth's description of the internal activity of poetry solely to an ill-digested reading of Hartley, but we should regard it rather as an honest testimony of a prerequisite in the final production of good poetry. In tracing the mind's permeation of reality, Wordsworth first of all draws attention to the idea of liberty. For him it is an essential condition of the poetic mind, and perhaps this aspect should be seen in our appreciation of such sonnets as 'On The Extinction of The Venetian Republic', 'To Toussaint L'Ouverture', etc., which are often considered to have a solely political significance. The importance of liberty lies in its connexion with harmony, for a caged and stifled soul cannot love harmony (the beauty, integrity, and proportion in the subject), for love is a union between similars.

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
Like harmony in music.

He points out the importance of the regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused within his mind which play a necessary part:

In making up  
The calm existence that is mine when  
I am worthy of myself.

In the early stages nature works by extrinsic passion, 'peopling the mind with forms sublime or fair', and she is sought for something other than herself—to calm the passions and to teach the mind beauty—but gradually she is sought for her own sake. If we substitute 'beauty' for 'nature' do we not see here the poet rising out of a didactic concept of the nature of the aesthetic experience, and seeing, perhaps not clearly, that the possession of nature, of beauty, is the true end of art? Wordsworth then goes on to describe how at this stage the poet must separate himself from all extraneous matter—he feels a necessity for the 'self-sufficing power of solitude'. In lines which could well be better known he shows us the growth of the poetic mind.

Feeling has to him imparted power  
That through the growing faculties of sense  
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind,  
Create, creator and receiver both,  
Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds.

## THE DUBLIN REVIEW

Now a trouble came into my mind  
 From unknown causes. I was left alone  
 Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.  
 The props of my affections were removed,  
 And yet the building stood, as if sustained  
 By its own spirit! All that I beheld  
 Was dear and hence to finer influxes  
 The mind lay open to a more exact  
 And close communion.

At this time the mind communes with the essence of things, and the poet sees it in terms of a union of the mind with reality.

What I saw  
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream,  
 A prospect in the mind.

An auxiliar light  
 Came from my mind, which on the setting sun  
 Bestowed new splendour.

I felt the sentiment of Being spread  
 O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist  
 Without Imagination, which in truth  
 Is but another name for absolute power  
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,  
 And Reason in her most exalted mood.

Imagination having been our theme,  
 So also hath that intellectual love  
 For they are each in each and cannot stand  
 Dividually.

From these quotations we can see the workings of an aesthetic with which we are in substantial agreement, but Wordsworth is not content to remain in the line of contemplation. Largely from the Kantian idea that it is the will alone which puts us in contact with reality and that the validity of contemplation is at best uncertain, Wordsworth attempts to harness poetry in the line of human good as such. He tells us that this communion led him to a true knowledge of the human problem, which is doubtless true but in the way he considers it aesthetically irrelevant. In verse which barely escapes banality he speaks of:

Life, human life, with all its sacred claims  
Of sex and age and heaven descended rights.

In aesthetic theory what an error, and as a natural consequence (as Coleridge would tell us) in verse, what a falling off was there.

With Keats we come to a dilemma, even perhaps to a contradiction. There is no doubt that he makes the correct distinction between the sphere of art and the sphere of morality; the trouble rather appears to be that he grants a pre-eminence to the one and underrates the value of the other. At first, however, there is a struggle about the nature of art itself.

In *Sleep and Poetry* we find a progression from a position which the poet sees as unsatisfactory, a position where his sole craving is:

... that I may die a death  
Of luxury,

and he decides:

... I must pass them for a nobler life,  
Where I may find the agonies, the strife  
Of human hearts.

Later in *Endymion*, and more clearly in *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, we have the view that beauty is an absolute to be pursued for its own sake. The latter two poems may be said to be allegories of the struggle of art and didactic. Keats rightly saw that the imagination must be fed not only with luxuriant sensations but the whole of experience. Knowledge is not the antithesis to poetry but its necessary complement. In the first book of *Hyperion* we first see the picture of the lack of poetic vision—the world of fireless action, represented by the fallen Saturn. In the second book we have Oceanus' desire to capitulate to the forces of Apollo, because, as he admits categorically, 'First in beauty should be first in might'. Similarly Clymene speaks of the struggle of the forces of joy and grief:

Grief overcame,  
And I was stopping up my frantic ears,  
When past all hindrance of my trembling hands,  
A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,  
And still it cried, 'Apollo! young Apollo!  
The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!'

Finally, in the description of Apollo, 'the father of all verse', loaded with epithets of light, fertility and beauty, we have good warrant for our interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the contestants in this heavenly combat:

Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,  
and  
Let the red wine within the goblet boil,  
and  
Full ankle deep in lilies of the vale.

From even such a cursory glance at his major poetry it seems fairly obvious that Keats is everywhere implying that the work of art is the pursuit of beauty. That Keats grants a pre-eminence to the realm of making seems fairly evident if *Hyperion* may be assumed to be more than an aesthetic allegory. And certainly in a letter to Bailey (1817), where he says he has 'a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflexion is the same as human life and its spiritual repetition', and in other passages, hackneyed by quotation, we seem to have a view which not only asserts that the pursuit of beauty is the highest of mortal goals, but he is propounding a theory which is inimical both to his own aesthetic and indeed to the nature of poetry itself. He is swallowing the world of 'action' in the world of 'making'. He has completely reversed the position of Wordsworth and the other romantics, but he has not thereby escaped from the didactic from which they were equally fleeing. An aesthetic which says that beauty is the goal of humanity necessarily implies something more than an 'intellective' pursuit of 'integrity', 'proportion', and 'ontological clarity', and brings into play all man's aspirations, desires, beliefs, and hopes—in fact his whole existence working towards its final end. Thus for Keats the end of man and the end of the artist have become identified. The wheel has turned full circle.

But as we said before, Keats' view is far from clear. This is shown by a letter which he wrote in March 1819, where he expresses a very different view from the above:

Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine. This is the very thing in which consists poetry, and if so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth.

Keats remains a mystery. Just as at times in his thought he appears to be didactic and at others to be enunciating a sound aesthetic, so in his poetry we notice that whereas often the purity of his verse is so clear that such a man surely could not write didactic poetry, in other instances we are not so sure.

In coming to Shelley we are dealing (as we were not in the case of Wordsworth and Keats) with a definite aesthetic emanating from a complete philosophical system. Thus the question of his didacticism will depend on the insufficiency (supposing it) of his theory and will be made apparent by any flaw in his technique. Two facts are evident about Shelley: as Mr. Eliot put it, 'Shelley said he abhorred didactic poetry yet he wrote didactic poetry.' From the beginning we must discount as evidence such expressions as 'poetry should be subordinate to the inculcated moral', for these were early and cannot be ranked against later and more mature views.

Shelley was always fundamentally a Platonist. Roughly speaking, the neo-Platonic theory sees art as the clothing of a transcendental Idea in an envelope of words, the aim being for the reader to recognize the archetypal Idea behind their poetic expression and be impelled to imitate It. The real trouble is in the conception of poetry as the clothing of an ideal, whereas in fact the poetic vision and its expression should be the same thing. The production of poetry is not the organization of a given experience but rather the exploration of an area of meaning which is then being given for the first time. Poetic reality is essentially a verbal or semantic reality. Shelley's wrong conception has necessitated for him a didactic use of symbol and form. His symbolism often represents not an inevitable freezing of apprehension, but its clothing—an action which involves of necessity an other than aesthetic process. One can sense as will be seen in his poetry a poetic experience bound to the limits of a myth as a set of ideas which are not part of that experience. Most useful perhaps for our present purposes will be an analysis of one of his major lyrics.

A study of the myth and symbolic expression of *Epipsychidion* will reveal the essential didacticism of Shelley. It will become apparent that he is trying to mould a poetic vision to a particular set of ideas, which he, believing to be true, is anxious to communicate to the readers. We will look at the poem from four angles; in each we shall try to show by a flaw in his technique that he is attempting to teach, that his work involves the problem of

morality and that consequently he is outside the field of art. Shelley, following Plato, is convinced in his own mind that the beautiful is above, beyond and other than the individual examples in which it is manifested. But do we not sense here in *Epipsychidion* a clash between thought and feeling? Although Shelley is teaching us that the ideal is beyond the individual, yet we feel instinctively in the poem at times that it is commensurate, indeed identified, with that individual. We see explicit indication of this in the close of the poem, where, forgetting his abstract idealism, he plans an elopement with Emily, and in the obvious jar, the sense of unreality, of empty rhetoric which runs through the lines where he is preaching polygamy. These lines conflict with his whole experience of love and, may we suggest, are a sop to his intellectual myth, coupled with a distaste for everything he associated with the morality of an age barren of imaginative vision. We see it in the somewhat cryptic lines:

O Thou of hearts the weakest,  
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest,

and in the relevant letters of this time there is this strife of vision and reason.

The second criterion is connected with the first and arises out of the divorce which his myth necessitates between ideal beauty and person. His search for a final beatitude in a cold abstraction, in an amalgam of primary and secondary qualities, gives to the poem not only a sense of pseudo-idealism, but of stark unreality, a sense of discord with his experience. Surely it is obvious from the poem that the primary object of his love was necessarily a person, and that he needs and seeks for reciprocation—vital reciprocation:

We, are we not formed, as notes of music are,  
For one another though dissimilar?

He complains of one veiled luminary that she 'warms but not illumines', and it is significant that he, probably unconsciously, describes his nadir of dejection in terms not of darkness but of coldness:

What frost  
Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast  
The moving billows of my being fell  
Into a death of ice immovable

—lines perhaps strongly reminiscent of the lowest circle of Hell in Dante's *Inferno*.

Thirdly, it may be observed that his description of the ecstasy of contemplation of the Intellectual Beauty bears a strong resemblance to the terminology of mystical experience. In the lines 'Love's very pain is sweet' and 'Till you might faint with that delicious pain' we can sense an unconscious echo of St. John of the Cross, of St. Teresa of Avila—a touch, nearer home, of Crashaw. That such a kind of love could be lavished on an abstraction is absurd, such an intensity of love on a creature, or rather a succession of creatures, equally so. Such love represents none other than the mystical union of creature and Creator—a conception, moreover, which makes sense out of the fine but otherwise palpably absurd lines:

We shall become the same, we shall be one  
Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?

One hope within two wills, one will beneath  
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,  
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,  
And one annihilation.

Such a union is possible between man and God, but in no other relation. His poetic experience was essentially religious and his expression shows the vanity of the attempted transmutation. Some indication of the true nature of his love is shown in:

The spirit of the worm beneath the sod  
In love and worship blends itself with God.

This weakness affects, fourthly, his whole symbolic structure, for in so far as his conceptual analysis of life is superimposed on his work, just so far will his images fail to correspond with their object, and thus be reduced from any vital function to the rôle of decorative allegory, and a false one at that. This is seen in what may be termed his cosmological passage. Here where he images himself as the Earth, Intellectual Beauty (Emily) as the Sun, Reason as the Moon (Mary), and a fourth anonymous being as a rather disturbing comet—he presents us with an interesting parable but no more. His analysis of the full-life process is so odd that whereas we may applaud his ingenuity, we can by no means

respond to his conception, and by no stretch of the critical imagination can we discover in the movements of the celestial bodies an analogue of the forces which govern Shelley's 'sphere of being night and day'. The imagery remains generally decorative—surely a sign of dissociated sensibility, a conception closely bound up with the question of didacticism. Decorative imagery evolves almost automatically from his Platonic misconception of the symbol or image as a veiling of the poetic vision, whereas it is in fact, to adopt a term of Hopkins', rather 'frozen music'. From this brief analysis of one of his major works I think we can be said to have illustrated his essential didacticism. Lacking a sound aesthetic tradition, he was led into the byways of Platonism, and he discovered to his cost the truth of Coleridge's dictum that poetry follows poetic theory.

In conclusion we may appeal to the feeling, general today, that there is something unsatisfactory about the romantics. It is undeniable that their vision was great, and their poetic potentialities were in the highest sense worthy of the English tradition. But, granting all this, we are disappointed in them—they do not consistently read well. It has been suggested many times that this is due to the lack of a healthy speculative and cultural background—in other words, of a formative soil—and we have in the course of this brief study tried to pinpoint this generalization, and to seek their flaw in the lack of a sound *poetic* theory, which, we contend, is usually inimical to the production of good verse. There is no doubt that at times, indeed often, their sheer genius bursts the bounds of the theory, and the 'drainless shower of light' stands unchallenged as the greatest poetry: but more often the very greatness and intensity of the poetic vision serve only to accentuate their weakness, and they remain, in spite of vigorous assertions to the contrary, poetically 'ineffectual angels', inevitably producers of that didactic which was their abhorrence; in short, the tragic victims of a dissociated sensibility.

# THE SOPHIANIC LURE

## A Study in the Sources of Solovyov's Philosophy

By LEONARD WALTON

SOLOVYOV'S account of the world process has been called a 'sophiogony'; but it would be equally legitimate to describe his whole philosophy as a 'sophiology'. For in all his immense reading and meditation Solovyov was engrossed in a perpetual search for a rational basis for his mystic vision of the 'Beautiful Lady'. He was haunted by Sophia as insistently as Dante by Beatrice or Petrarch by Laura. This Sophianic lure (coupled with Solovyov's stress on 'integral knowledge') accounts in a large measure for the eclectic and heterogeneous character of his thought. The quest for Sophia led him along the broad highways as well as down many obscure, mysterious bypaths of human speculation. For a proper appreciation of his strange theosophy it is therefore necessary to view Solovyov not only against the intellectual and religious background of nineteenth-century Russia, but also in relation to the complex body of influences—ancient and modern, Orthodox and Catholic, Western and Eastern, rationalistic and occult—which coloured and shaped the 'Christian gnosis' of this modern Romantic Origen.<sup>1</sup>

### I

Almost the whole of nineteenth-century Russian thought revolved around the problem of the 'two-faced Russian Janus'. Did Russia truly belong to Europe, and was its culture really a part of the Western tradition? This central problem of Russian history

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Masaryk: 'Solov'ev was, as it were, a modern Origen, nor was it a chance matter that Origen should have exerted so strong an attraction upon him. We have in Solov'ev the same attempt as in Origen to reconcile gnosis with orthodoxy; upon a Platonist basis there is effected an association between mysticism and revelation, between the human and the divine. It delighted Solov'ev to find that Origen laid so much stress upon the idea of the God-man, while as a systematist Solov'ev was delighted with the first attempt at a systematization of Christian doctrine' (*The Spirit of Russia*, Vol. II, p. 258).

which constantly recurred under various forms and in different contexts long divided the intelligentsia into two camps. On the one hand, the 'Westerners' regarded Russia simply as a backward European state and called for the immediate absorption of Western rationalism, liberalism and technology. On the other, the 'Slavophiles' repudiated the diabolical work of Peter the Great and asserted that Russia could develop healthily only if it remained faithful to its distinctive national tradition and fostered an Orthodox civilization in isolation from the sceptical, materialistic and decadent West. Both parties, however, were at one in their opposition to the Petersburg Empire and in their hostility to the Church of Rome.

In this long-drawn-out debate which became increasingly exacerbated as the century wore on Solovyov occupied a central, conciliating position, though his Catholic tendencies were to draw upon him acrimonious abuse from both sides. Although as a schoolboy he had been an enthusiastic disciple of the positivist men of the 'sixties like Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov and Pisarev, he soon outgrew their ideas and discountenanced especially such trends as sterile cosmopolitanism, atheistic materialism and revolutionary nihilism which had flourished within the Western camp. But he continued to share the Westerners' enthusiasm for the practical achievements of liberalism and humanitarianism; for he felt strongly that divine Providence can work through agnostics and unbelievers as well as through Christians, and that much of modern progress could be regarded as an unwitting attempt to realize in practice those humanistic and social aspects of Christianity ignored or neglected by its nominal adherents.<sup>1</sup> Solovyov also held the Westerners' belief in progress; but unlike them he defined it as the progressive realization of Christianity or the gradual embodiment of Sophia in the world. He possessed an astounding knowledge of modern Western philosophy; but while not disregarding its positive achievements, he clearly discerned the ultimately destructive nature of its influence. Above all, Solovyov always respected the honest doubt of the 'sceptics of the Neva' and was fond of recalling the two Apostles, Judas and St. Thomas: 'Judas greeted Christ with words and with a kiss. Thomas declared his unbelief in Him to His face. But Judas betrayed Christ and went and hanged himself, while Thomas remained an apostle and died for Christ'.

<sup>1</sup> Hence Solovyov's qualified approval of the Reform of Peter the Great.

Nevertheless, Solovyov had as much in common with the Slavophiles as with the Westerners. His 'conversion' was greatly influenced by the writings of the early founders of Slavophilism like Khomiakov and Kireevsky, while he long stood on close personal terms with I. Aksakov and Samarin. No doubt, as he drew closer to Catholicism, he rejected the unhistorical idealization, the national self-complacency and the narrow exclusiveness of Orthodox Slavophilism. The stylized, antiquarian religion of the Slavophiles seemed a vainglorious faith in the Russian people rather than the Christian faith of that people. They had in practice reduced a universal religion to an 'attribute of Russian nationality'. The inevitable nemesis of Slavophilism was Panslavism which, in the hands of men like Katkov, Strakhov and Danilevsky had become a chauvinistic nationalism—a 'zoological patriotism'. However, it is an indisputable fact that Solovyov remained closely akin to the best Slavophil tradition by his recognition of the primacy of the spiritual order, by his belief in the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Graeco-Russian Church and by his proclamation of the glorious messianic mission reserved in history for the Slav and, particularly, the Russian people. Solovyov's theocratic ideal is indeed largely a restatement in Catholic and Sophianic terms of the familiar Slavophil watchword—Moscow the Third Rome. Insofar as theocracy for Solovyov meant the incarnation of the Wisdom of God on earth, Russia's vocation seemed darkly intimated by its mysterious ancient cult of Sophia represented in the Novgorodian iconography in the form of a being with a virginal countenance to whom Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin stand in a peculiarly close relationship. The Russians, then, were the theocratic people *par excellence*; however, their rôle involved not arrogance, but the painful renunciation of political and religious nationalism as the precondition of the establishment of a universal theocracy based upon the three pillars of the Roman Papacy, the Russian Tsardom and God's Prophethood. Thus, as Strémooukhoff observes, Solovyov's severe strictures upon the aberrations of Slavophilism and Panslavism are not unlike the burning wrath of the Old Testament prophet who, though he lashes his own nation for its sinful idolatry, nevertheless remains firmly convinced that Israel is the chosen people.

Of all his Russian contemporaries, Dostoevsky probably exerted the deepest influence upon Solovyov. Though they had first met in 1873, it was only from 1877 that they entered into a

close friendship. Dostoevsky attended Solovyov's public lectures and accompanied him to Countess S. Tolstoy's salon. Their interminable midnight conversations are said to be reflected in the long intellectual dialogues of the *Brothers Karamazov*. The culmination of their friendship was marked by their pilgrimage together in 1878 to the renowned Optina monastery, where they sat at the feet of the venerable elder Father Ambrose. There is supposed to be a fictional account of Solovyov's discussions with the 'starets' in the conversations of Alyosha and Father Zosima. Solovyov regarded Dostoevsky not only as a friend, but as the Prophet who, in *Crime and Punishment* and *The Possessed*, had strangely foreshadowed the shape of things to come. From Dostoevsky Solovyov probably derived his initial hostility to the Roman Church (cf. the story of the Grand Inquisitor in the *Brothers Karamazov*) as well as his idealized vision of the Russian peasantry as the 'cross-bearing' people joined in mystical union with Christ. He also appears to have taken over from Dostoevsky the famous contrast in *The Possessed* between the God-Man and the Man-God. Finally, he discovered in Dostoevsky the outline of his own theocratic ideal. Dostoevsky, indeed, had privately confided to his young friend that he had come to regard the Church as 'the positive social ideal' and that he identified the Woman of the Apocalypse with Russia. Then, in his speech on the occasion of the dedication of the Pushkin statue in Moscow in 1880, he had transcended the old conflict of Westerners and Slavophiles by emphasizing the 'pan-humanity' of the Russian people and by formulating Russia's messianic mission to utter that Word which would reconcile East and West within the universal brotherhood of Christ.

Tolstoy, on the other hand, held small appeal for Solovyov. At first, no doubt, Solovyov had hoped to work together with Tolstoy for a common religious ideal; but personal intercourse often gave rise to friction. As early as 1884 Solovyov was suspicious of Tolstoy's religion and finally, in the *Three Conversations*, he overtly impugned Tolstoyism as such. Certainly there could be little in common between the author of the *Critique of Dogmatic Theology* and that of the *Lectures on Godmanhood*. Solovyov was the advocate of universal theocracy; in Tolstoy's eyes institutional religion represented the sin against the Holy Ghost. Solovyov derided Tolstoy's shallow rationalism as displayed in his attempt to demonstrate the mathematical absurdity of the Trinity; Tolstoy rejected as childish and absurd Solovyov's conception of

Godmanhood. Solovyov preached a positive, mystical Christianity; Tolstoy sought to rid Christianity of all dogma and reduced it to an abstract moralism. Tolstoy denied the divinity of Jesus Christ; Solovyov wanted to extend it to all mankind. The only link between the two men was their earnest endeavour to translate Christianity into practical, social terms. Here they found common ground in their request to Tsar Alexander III to spare the assassins of his father, in their activities to relieve the victims of the famine of 1891 and in their campaign on behalf of the persecuted Jews of Russia. However, the chief stumbling-block was the doctrine of the Resurrection which was repudiated by Tolstoy, but upheld by Solovyov as the central belief of Christianity. The Tolstoyan ethic was likewise repugnant to Solovyov, who condemned it as merely pseudo-Christian and more akin to Buddhism. The principle of non-resistance to evil, in particular, seemed to be smoothing the way for the imminent advent of the dark forces of Antichrist who, in Solovyov's tale, bears many Tolstoyan traits.

More congenial to Solovyov was the Russian thinker Konstantin Leontiev, who is often called 'the Russian Nietzsche' and who has also much in common with Joseph de Maistre, Gobineau, Spengler and Maurras. After being successively doctor, diplomat, journalist and censor, he visited Mt. Athos, resided at Optina Pustyn', and in 1891 died a professed monk at the Troitzki monastery near Moscow. Having met Leontiev in the early 'eighties, Solovyov formed a very intimate friendship with him and held him in high regard.<sup>1</sup> Both men were independent, isolated thinkers who were distrusted alike by Left and Right, by Westerners and Slavophiles. However, they were otherwise almost complete opposites. Solovyov was a philosopher, a theologian and a mystic; Leontiev was a scientist, a publicist and an aesthete. Solovyov was an optimist looking forward to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth; Leontiev was a pessimist with a profound contempt for man, for reason and nature, for all mundane utopias. Solovyov's faith was compassionate, humanistic and social; that of Leontiev was coercive, ascetic and narrowly individualistic. Solovyov considered that Leontiev's merit lay in having set the religious idea above the national idea; but whereas Solovyov found the universal symbol of religion in Rome, Leontiev

<sup>1</sup> Solovyov thought Leontiev 'wiser than Danilevsky, more original than Herzen and personally more religious than Dostoievsky'.

sought it in 'Byzantinism' as exemplified in Orthodoxy and Autocracy. Slavdom was merely the material substratum of the Byzantine form or idea (cf. *Russia, the East and Slavdom*). At the same time Leontiev was drawn to old Europe—Catholic, monarchic and feudal. He particularly loved Renaissance Europe with all its colourful diversity. However, he loathed bourgeois liberal democracy with its uniform machine culture and its levelling egalitarianism triumphant in the modern West since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Liberalism marked not progress but the decay of the West, and unless Russia could be 'frozen' to prevent it from putrescence, it too stood in peril of infection from the liberal virus. Politically, Leontiev was a Romantic 'Ultra' whose outlook was diametrically opposed to all liberal humanitarianism or Christian socialism. He made a devastating attack upon Dostoevsky's 'Neo-Christianity'—i.e. the latter's belief in the speedy arrival of universal harmony on earth.<sup>1</sup> Solovyov attempted to defend Dostoevsky against this rejection of the advent of the Kingdom of God on earth; but what completely outraged Leontiev was Solovyov's apologia of progressive humanitarianism in the *Decline of the Medieval World-Outlook* (1891). 'After this,' he wrote, 'I can have nothing in common with Solovyov.' He tore up Solovyov's photograph, called him Satan and tried seriously to get him expelled from Russia. Up to his death, Leontiev had been powerfully influenced by Solovyov, while the latter, though admiring the brilliant originality of certain of Leontiev's views, could not accept his general outlook. However, towards the end, Solovyov in his turn came under the influence of Leontiev's radically pessimistic view of life and history. In particular, he was most susceptible to Leontiev's premonition of the approach of Antichrist.<sup>2</sup>

Another isolated Russian thinker who influenced Solovyov was Nikolai Fyodorov (1823–1903), a saintly eccentric librarian of the Rumiantsev Museum in Moscow and little-known author of a posthumously published *Philosophy of the Common Task*. Fyodorov also impressed Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, while the latter was swift

<sup>1</sup> 'It is not the complete and universal triumph of love and justice on this earth which is promised us by Christ and the Apostles; on the contrary, it is something in the manner of an apparent failure of evangelism on the globe, for the approach of the end must correspond with the last attempts to make men good Christians.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Russian society which is already egalitarian in its customs will be dragged more rapidly than other societies along the fatal road of general confusion. . . . We shall unexpectedly give birth to Antichrist sprung from the bowels of our political system, which will first of all abolish class distinctions and then all vestiges of an ecclesiastical principle.'

to perceive the similarity of Fyodorov's ideas with those of Solovyov. Having met Fyodorov in the 'eighties, Solovyov headed his letters to him 'Dear Master and Consoler'. Solovyov must have been encouraged by Fyodorov's attitude that philosophy must be not merely theoretical and abstract, but active, dynamic, practical. He may also have found a confirmation of his sociological views in Fyodorov's doctrine that we must live neither for ourselves alone (i.e. 'egoism') nor just for others (i.e. 'altruism'), but with all and for all on the model of the family and the religious orders. However, what particularly struck Solovyov was the main 'project' of Fyodorov's common task—viz. the brotherly union of all mankind, the gradual mastery of hunger, natural calamities and disease, and finally the conquest of death itself through the combined resources of religion, art and science. The active resuscitation of the 'fathers' by the 'sons'—such is the fulfilment of the legacy of Christ who Himself conquered death and whose individual resurrection postulates a universal resurrection.<sup>1</sup> Some of Fyodorov's strange mystical notions seem to have coloured Solovyov's own theurgic view of art and love; while Fyodorov's stress upon the principle of Fatherhood as well as his conception of Moscow the Third Rome as the realization of the Trinitarian principle must also have appealed to Solovyov. However, Solovyov differed from Fyodorov over the aim of the 'common task'. For Fyodorov it implied the physical resuscitation of all mankind; but for Solovyov it meant the restoration of 'Ideal Humanity', i.e. Wisdom incarnate or Sophia as it was before its Fall. Then again, Fyodorov identifies with Wisdom the Logos-Son to whom he opposes the Spirit-Daughter. Finally, in his last apocalyptic period, Solovyov must have realized that Fyodorov's religion savoured far too strongly of 'naturalism' and magic, and that his 'project' amounted in fact to nothing else than an attempt to side-step the End of the World and the Last Judgement.

Westerners and Slavophiles, Dostoievsky, Tolstoy, Leontiev and Fyodorov—such is the Russian intellectual and spiritual background from which Solovyov emerges. The fact that his thought moves along such characteristically Russian lines accounts for the deep influence which he has exerted upon subsequent Russian religious philosophy. Hence too his novel freshness for Western

<sup>1</sup> 'Your "project" I accept unreservedly and without discussion,' Solovyov wrote to Fyodorov. 'Since the appearance of Christianity your "project" is the first forward movement of the human spirit along the way of Christ. For my part I can only regard you as my teacher and spiritual father.'

readers.<sup>1</sup> But deep-rooted though he is in his Russian milieu, Solovyov remarkably transcends the narrow philosophical frontiers of his native land. His curiosity ranged far beyond Russia, though he remained no doubt convinced that Russia's ultimate mission was to utter that 'word' which would reconcile all religious, philosophical and national divisions. A study of the origins of Solovyov's philosophy must therefore take into account not only his Russian setting, but also those multifarious Western and Eastern influences which he assimilated into his all-embracing system of 'free theosophy', 'free theocracy' and 'free theurgy'.

## II

A primary source of Solovyov's thought which is not always emphasized as frankly as it should be is his deep interest in that darkly swirling undercurrent of occultism, heterodox mysticism and theosophical speculation which has always accompanied the main stream of religious and philosophical orthodoxy and which always seems to come into special prominence whenever a great historical culture is in decline—e.g. the late Roman Empire, the late Middle Ages and the late eighteenth century. During the past few decades it is at last becoming more widely known how pervasive an influence was exerted upon European Romanticism by this occult tradition. Auguste Viatte's study of *Les Sources occultes du romantisme* and Albert Béguin's *L'Ame romantique et le rêve* are outstanding works in this field. Blake's and Yeats' interest in occultism is common knowledge; but what is less fully realized is how such currents of thought attracted Goethe;<sup>2</sup> the fantastic story-tellers like Jacques Cazotte, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Charles Nodier, Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Lautréamont and Villiers de l'Isle Adam;<sup>3</sup> Balzac;<sup>4</sup> Hugo;<sup>5</sup> Baudelaire;<sup>6</sup> and especially Rimbaud.<sup>7</sup> By his interest in the occult, therefore, Solovyov may be regarded as a typical Romantic. His article on 'Mysticism' in the Russian Brock-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Muckermann: 'Sind seine Prägungen nicht so schulmeisterlich bedingt und in ihrer sprudelnden Lebendigkeit weit von Systemstarre entfernt, gleichen sie weniger der streng stilisierten Architektur der westlichen Kathedralen und mehr der breit hinströmenden Wolga, dem "Mütterchen Wolga", so hat das sicher seine Vorzüge und seinen Reiz' (*Wl. Solowiew*, pp. 58-59).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Erich Trunz's recent edition of *Faust*.

<sup>3</sup> Vide *Le Conte fantastique en France*, by Castex.

<sup>4</sup> Vide the chapter on 'Le sens occultiste du mysticisme' in Bertaut's *Balzac*.

<sup>5</sup> Vide Saurat's *La Religion de V. Hugo*.

<sup>6</sup> Vide Ferrand's *L'Esthétique de Baudelaire*.

<sup>7</sup> Vide Gencoux's recent thesis, *La Pensée poétique de Rimbaud*.

haus-Efron Encyclopaedia indicates how thoroughly he knew the Gnostics, the Judaeo-Christian Cabala, the Vedanta, the spurious or heterodox mysticism of mediaeval Europe, the Renaissance alchemists, astrologists and occultists,<sup>1</sup> the *theosophus teutonicus* Jakob Boehme and his followers, the eighteenth-century Rosicrucians, Illuminists and charlatans,<sup>2</sup> those 'irrationalist', mystic or sentimental currents of thought flowing counter to the spirit of the Enlightenment,<sup>3</sup> and the nineteenth-century Theosophists under the leadership of Mme Blavatsky, Annie Besant and Col. Olcott. Solovyov was also attracted to the study of paranormal phenomena—magic, clairvoyance, telepathy, hypnotism, spiritualism and so on. No doubt Solovyov's absorption in the occult was at its height during the 'seventies. Indeed he even seriously contemplated composing a 'mystico-theosophico-philosophico-theurigicopolitical dialogue'! However, his theosophical preoccupations never entirely disappeared even during his theocratic period, as emerges clearly from the third part of *La Russie et l'Eglise universelle*, while in the 'nineties they return particularly strongly in his writings on Art and Love. Only at the very end did all this fantastic but poetically suggestive occultism fall away from Solovyov.

Solovyov was deeply read in Gnosticism and once planned to write a book on the subject. He was responsible for the Encyclopaedia articles on Basilides, Valentinus and Hermes Trismegistus, and he has also left a poem entitled 'The Song of the Ophites'. Some critics (e.g. J. Danza) have sought analogies between the Gnostic systems and Solovyov's sophiological speculation. It is indeed clear that the Gnostic association of a Mother Goddess<sup>4</sup> with the unbegotten Father as well as the Gnostic account of the origin of the material cosmos have left their mark upon Solovyov's thought. However, as Dom Wesseling has pointed out, it is necessary to make important distinctions. In the first place, there is according to the Gnostics a series of intermediary beings (called eons) set between God and abject humanity; but for Solovyov there can be no possible intermediary, for in the progress towards Godmanhood 'man becomes the God which he was in potency'. Furthermore, the humanity of Christ was for the Gnostics merely a delusive appearance, but for Solovyov a reality. Then again, the

<sup>1</sup> Reuchlin, Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Paracelsus, Nostradamus, Kepler, Andrea, Robert Fludd, Van Helmont.

<sup>2</sup> Pasqualis, Casanova, the Comte de Saint-Germain, Cagliostro, Mesmer, the *philosophe inconnu* Saint-Martin, Lavater, Jung-Stilling, Eckartshausen, Swedenborg.

<sup>3</sup> Hemsterhuis, Hamann, Herder, Jacobi.

<sup>4</sup> Helena, Wisdom, Isis, Silence.

Gnostics taught a radical dualism between spirit and matter, whereas Solovyov sees man as the potential saviour of the whole creation. Finally, Valentinus held that through her sinful desire to know the Father, Sophia (the 30th eon) fell from the Pleroma and produced a miserable abortion, that Sophia was restored by Horos to the Pleroma by separation from her product (Hachamoth or the inferior Sophia) and that Hachamoth-Sophia is redeemed only by the intervention of the 31st, 32nd and 33rd eons (called Christ, the Holy Spirit and Jesus respectively). But whereas the movement of redemption is for the Gnostics downward from God to man, Solovyov sees the fallen Sophia (or World-soul) striving actively upwards to God by means of successive unions with the Logos.

More important than Gnosticism, however, was the influence upon Solovyov of the Judaeo-Christian Cabala. He wrote an authoritative article on the Cabala for the Russian Encyclopaedia, for which he was well fitted by his knowledge of Hebrew and by his interest in the subject. As early as the 'seventies he seems to have been studying at the British Museum the *Kabbala denudata* of Knorr von Rosenroth, which he considered the main source of cabalistic lore. He also composed in London a strange prayer which begins: 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost—En Sof, Yah, Sof-Yah' and which concludes with an appeal to Sophia (i.e. Sof-Yah), image of God's power and beauty: 'Incarnate thyself in us and in the world' so that God may be 'all in all'. The ostensible reason which he gave to de Vogüé for his abrupt visit to Egypt was that he was searching for '*une tribu où des initiés conservaient, lui avait-on dit, certains secrets de la Cabale, certaines traditions maçonniques héritées directement du roi Salomon*'. Quite apart from the thaumaturgical practices associated with the Cabala, much of its speculative doctrine must have impressed Solovyov: the divinization of the material cosmos conceived as '*das umgekehrte weibliche Abbild der Gottheit*'<sup>1</sup> (Molitor); the distinction between the masculine Sefirah 'Hokmah' (i.e. the Logos) and the female Sefirah Malkut (i.e. Sophia or the 'Wisdom of Solomon') which is frequently identified with Shekinah (i.e. the Divinity in the World); Adam Qadmon (i.e. the celestial Adam, the sexless or bisexual archetypal man); the *active* share of mankind in the 'Yihud' (i.e. the reunion of nature with God), the ultimate return of all things (including Satan) to the bosom of their infinite Source. Strémoukhoff, who has cogently argued Solovyov's debt

<sup>1</sup> The reversed female image of the Divinity.

to the Cabala is convinced that for Solovyov as for Khunrath: '*Fons est illimis Sophiae: divina Cabala*'.

To Gnosticism and the Cabala must be added yet another source of Solovyov's thought—his wide acquaintance with the works of the Eastern and Western mystics. He was sufficiently conversant with Oriental mysticism to be able to tackle the 'Vedanta' and 'Hinduism' for the Russian Encyclopaedia. He was also steeped in the monastic and folk mysticism of Russia. But it nevertheless remains broadly true that just as he always stressed the active or dynamic element in religion, so he naturally preferred Western mysticism to that of the East.

His Encyclopaedia article on 'Mysticism' reveals his knowledge of the European mystics—Catholics, Protestants and Theosophists. He also wrote detailed articles on Hugh of Saint-Victor. Ramon Lull and Nicolas of Cusa. He admired Dante and Petrarch, He knew Abbot Joachim of Flora, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the pantheistically tinged Meister Eckhart, Tauler and Blessed Henry Suso,<sup>1</sup> and the *Theologia Germanica*. It seems improbable that Solovyov was acquainted with Dom Augustine Baker's *Sancta Sophia*, but is it just possible that he may have known Julian of Norwich's classic meditations on the 'Motherhood of God':

As verily as God is our Father, so verily God is our Mother, and that shewed He in all and especially in these sweet words where He saith: I it am. That is to say, I it am, the Might and the Goodness of the Fatherhood; I it am, the Wisdom of the Motherhood; I it am, the Light and the Grace that is all blessed Love; I it am, the Trinity; I it am, the Unity?

No doubt Solovyov would have been intrigued to find that Dame Julian saw the Divine Motherhood as grounded in the Divine Being, but appropriated more particularly to the Second Person of the Trinity ('Mother Jesus') regarded as the Eternal Wisdom and as the Saviour whose redemptive act shows forth 'the Motherhood of working'.

However, it is known as a certain fact that Paracelsus appeared to Solovyov 'an original and all-embracing mystic', while he called Boehme and Swedenborg 'real men'. Swedenborg's doctrine: 'God is man', his theory of 'correspondences', his stress upon Christian activity in the world, his vision of the future 'Church of the New Jerusalem' and his conception of Hell and the Devil

<sup>1</sup> 'The servant of the Eternal Wisdom.'

must have seemed fruitful to Solovyov. But there can be little doubt that of all the mystics Jakob Boehme and his disciples had the most decisive influence upon the Russian. He had studied such Boehmist mystics as Pordage, Gichtel and Arnold—'the specialists in Sophia', as he called them. A Cambridge Platonist and founder of the Philadelphian sect, Dr. John Pordage (1601–81), was an Anglican clergyman in whose mystical theosophy Sophia or Heavenly Wisdom is represented as 'the eye of eternity', as the consort or attendant of the Trinity and as the revealer of the secret mysteries of the Godhead. Another Philadelphian seer was Mrs. Jane Lead (1623–1704) whose diary, *A Fountain of Gardens*, records her visions of Wisdom in the form of a radiant Virgin. An editor of Boehme's works, Johann Gichtel (1638–1710) was a German ascetic and mystic, author of *Theosophia practica*, to whom earthly marriage seemed a perversion of the original order of creation—viz.: the spiritual union of man with *die himmlische Jungfrau Sophia* in the primordial androgyne Adam. Similar notions were also to be found in the *Geheimnis der göttlichen Sophia oder Weisheit* of the Lutheran pietist and mystic, Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714). However, Pordage, Gichtel and Arnold are relatively unoriginal and insignificant, and their main interest derived from the congruence of their mystical experiences with that of Solovyov. 'Among these mystics,' he wrote, 'there are many confirmations of my own ideas, but no new light.'

Jakob Boehme, on the other hand, exerted a powerful influence upon Solovyov's Sophianic doctrine. '*Die göttliche Jungfrau Sophia*' holds a central place in Boehme's system. For Boehme Sophia represents, among other things, the Divine Idea, the manifestation of the Divinity, the celestial Humanity.<sup>1</sup> But whereas Solovyov stresses the active, objective task of humanity to embody Wisdom, the Boehmist conception of man's relation to Sophia is more subjective and passive, as appears in Boehme's own account of that 'inner choir' where 'the soul joineth hands and danceth with Sophia or the Divine Wisdom':

Then Virgin Sophia appeareth in the stirring of the spirit of Christ in the extinguished image, in her Virgin's attire before the soul; at which the soul is so amazed and astonished in its uncleanness that all its sins immediately awake in it, and it trembles before

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Koyré: 'La Vierge céleste s'incarne, ou, si l'on veut, le corps de Dieu incarne la Vierge céleste. On pourrait dire aussi que Dieu s'incarne lui-même dans la Sophia' (*La Philosophie de J. Boehme*, p. 377).

her. . . . But the noble Sophia draweth near to the essence of the soul, and kisseth it in friendly manner, and tinctureth its dark fire with her rays of love, and shineth through it with her bright and powerful influence. Penetrated with the strong sense and feeling of which, the soul skippeth in its body for great joy.

Another difference is that for the Boehmists the existence of an imperfect world and the appearance of evil are ascribed to the fall of Lucifer and the wicked angels, while Solovyov who for a long time did not believe in the Devil seems to have taught an *Abfall der Idee* or a fall of Sophia. Nevertheless, Solovyov was much influenced by other Boehmist themes. Firstly, the presence of the Trinity in all things so constantly stressed by Boehme is a thought likewise dear to Solovyov. Then again, Boehme and his epigones taught that man and woman had resulted from the original androgynous Adam as he existed before the Fall, so that the mystic meaning of love must be the yearning to restore in humanity the primordial *Gottes—oder Jungfraubild*.

Among more recent manifestations of occultism Solovyov was definitely interested in Rosicrucianism and mystical Freemasonry. Indeed he is known to have supplied Pisemsky with the documentation for the novel *The Freemasons*. His trip to Egypt may also be partly explained by the fact that the ancient land of the Goddess Isis and of the mythical 'Thrice Greatest Hermes' is reputed to have been formerly a centre of certain theurgic, alchemistic arts to which the Rosicrucians claimed to have been initiated. Strémoukhoff hints that there may well be strange overtones attaching to the 'chemistry' by which Solovyov hoped to resolve the epistemological problem and the division of the Churches. As regards the Theosophical Society, however, there is much exaggeration in Masaryk's sweeping statement: 'The impracticable theosophy of his compatriot Mme Blavatsky was more than condoned by Solovyov'.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that Solovyov regarded Mme Blavatsky's Neo-Buddhism as a spiritual form of that Yellow Peril which menaced European society: 'In the theosophy of Mme Blavatsky and Co. we see an attempt to adapt Buddhism to the metaphysical and mystical needs of semi-educated European society.' Spiritualism, on the other hand, was taken very seriously by Solovyov at first under the influence of Professor Yurkevich of Moscow University and then in the circle around Countess S. Tolstoy, the widow of the poet Aleksey Tolstoy, who had been

<sup>1</sup> *Spirit of Russia*, Vol. II, p. 264.

greatly attracted himself to all forms of occultism. In 1875 England was the centre of world spiritualism, and Solovyov attended many séances in London. He appears to have impressed the English spiritualist leader, A. R. Wallace, who ranks Solovyov with A. Aksakov and Boutlerov as 'the great Russian spiritualists'.<sup>1</sup> But on the whole Solovyov was disappointed by spiritualism. He declared that the celebrated medium Williams was nothing but a common conjuror. In spiritualism, he concluded, there are 'on the one hand charlatans, on the other blind believers and a small nucleus of genuine magic which it is almost impossible to disentangle in such a hotchpotch'.

### III

As is indicated by Solovyov's appointment as editor of the philosophical section of the Russian Encyclopaedia, he possessed an extensive and profound knowledge of philosophy. He wrote for it the articles on Hinduism in which he had become interested through Schopenhauer and Ed. von Hartmann; but he was mainly conversant with Western philosophy—ancient and modern. True, he had little acquaintance with St. Thomas Aquinas or with the mediaeval Schoolmen in general. 'Only later did he encounter these thinkers,' writes Muckermann, 'and therefore he had laboriously to work out for himself much which they have to offer in a perhaps more perfect form.'<sup>2</sup> It may even be significant that the only great Scholastic philosopher upon whom Solovyov has left an article is Duns Scotus whose subtle dialectic, though it in no sense undermined the basis of the mediaeval synthesis, nevertheless can be seen historically to form the bridge between the Thomist tradition of the thirteenth century and the more destructive Ockhamist criticism of the fourteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

As a mystic steeped in the tradition of Eastern Christianity, Solovyov was a Platonist rather than an Aristotelian. He translated some of Plato's *Dialogues* into Russian and wrote the Encyclopaedia article on Plato as well as a remarkable essay, *The Tragic Life of Plato*.<sup>4</sup> What appealed to Solovyov in Platonism was the poetical, mystic Idealism, the firm belief in an objective, uni-

<sup>1</sup> *My Life*, Vol. II, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Wladimir Solowiew*, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Vide Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 566.

<sup>4</sup> 'The weakness and downfall of the divine Plato,' he wrote, 'show that man cannot make himself superhuman by means of thought, genius and moral purpose; none but a God-man can do that.'

versally valid Truth, the doctrine of the Demiurge and the World-soul as representing together the Divine Reason immanent in the world, the view of Eros as the bridge linking earth and Heaven, the conception of natural and artistic beauty as but a shadow of Beauty itself, and the theory of the Ideal State. Solovyov was also acquainted with Philo the Jew, who had attempted to wed Platonism with Judaeism. The Philonic doctrine of the Logos<sup>1</sup> seems to have somewhat influenced that of Solovyov. Moreover, Philo teaches that the end of life is to break the thralldom of the senses and to rise by a sort of ecstasy to an immediate vision of God. Similar notions may, however, have reached Solovyov through the Neoplatonists who sought to combine Platonism with the mysticism of the East. Solovyov wrote Encyclopaedia articles on Plotinus, Porphyry and Proclus, and he must have been attracted by the magic and thaumaturgy which characterized the later Neoplatonism. In Plotinus, Solovyov seems to have noted the doctrine that the world proceeds from God *secundum necessitatem naturae*, the distinction of a higher and a lower World-soul, and the conception of the highest knowledge as mystical absorption into the Divine; while from Proclus he may have derived that idea of triadic development which he likewise found more fully elaborated in Hegel.

However, Solovyov immersed himself not only in Jewish Hellenism and pagan Neoplatonism, but also in the works of those Apologists and early Fathers who attempted to harmonize the Platonic philosophy with the Christian faith—e.g. St. Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzus, St. Gregory of Nyssa, the Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Maxim the Confessor, John Scotus Erigena.<sup>2</sup> From this quarter may stem many of Solovyov's characteristic traits: the doctrine of an eternal and necessary creation; the subordinationist view of the Logos; the claim to deduce the Trinity *rationibus necessariis*; the idea of a pre-cosmic fall; the tendency to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Copleston: 'Generally speaking Philo speaks simply of the Logos, though he distinguishes two aspects or functions of Logos, the first consisting in the immaterial world of ideas, the second in the visible things of this world, insofar as they are copies of the immaterial ideas. . . . This Logos is an incorporeal substance, the immaterial Word or Voice of God; but insofar as it is conceived as really distinct from God, it is conceived as subordinate to God, as God's instrument. . . . In other words the Philonic Logos . . . is not the consubstantial word of the Father, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity' (*History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp. 459-60).

<sup>2</sup> E. I. Watkin rightly calls Erigena the first of the Russian sophiologists: 'This Irish philosopher was the first of the Russians, a Russian before Christian Russia had come into existence' (*Men and Tendencies*, p. 192).

pantheistic monism; the stress on *deificatio*; the distinction between God's idea of Man without sexual differentiation and actual fallen humanity divided into male and female; the teaching of the 'restoration of all things' whereby all beings (even Satan) will return to their ultimate Principle and God will be *omnia in omnibus*. Moreover, Solovyov must have realized that, as Evelyn Underhill puts it, 'mysticism has so far found its best map in Christianity. Christian philosophy, especially that Neoplatonic theology which, taking up and harmonizing all that was best in the spiritual intuitions of Greece, India and Egypt, was developed by the great doctors of the early and mediaeval Church, supports and elucidates the revelation of the individual mystic as no other system of thought has been able to do'.<sup>1</sup>

Solovyov was also drawn to that Renaissance Neoplatonism and nature mysticism which expressed a certain reaction against the predominantly Aristotelian Scholasticism of the late Middle Ages—e.g. Bessarion, Nicolas of Cusa, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, Campanella, Kepler and Van Helmont. Solovyov wrote the Encyclopaedia articles on Nicolas of Cusa and Campanella.<sup>2</sup> Despite the personal differences, the Renaissance Neoplatonists evolved a general outlook particularly sympathetic to Solovyov.<sup>3</sup> They stress the basic unity of man, nature and the All. The world is a living organism endowed with a soul—a macrocosm of which God is at once the beginning and the end. There is a universal 'sympathy' which pervades all the particular manifestations of cosmic life and which underlies such practices as astrology, alchemy and magic. Man himself is a microcosm of the universe and the source of Truth. True knowledge is sought not by abstract rationalism, but by intuition, introspection and contemplation; for the creation is full of mysterious 'analogies' or symbolical allusions to the One. Finally, learning is pursued as a universal, integrated whole. But what attracted Solovyov most of all in the Renaissance Neoplatonists, as indeed in the whole Platonist tradition, was no doubt the organic union of unsystematic intellectualism with suggestive poetry and religious mysticism. Solovyov himself lacks the heavenly limpidness, simplicity and lucidity of

<sup>1</sup> *Mysticism*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *The City of the Sun* calls for the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth—a universal theocracy aiming at the physical, intellectual and moral improvement of mankind.

<sup>3</sup> Vide Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*.

St. Thomas; but his Romantic style glows with the dark, bewitching flame of the Platonic Eros.

However, Solovyov's academic career led him to specialize first and foremost in modern, post-Cartesian philosophy. His knowledge extended even to such immediate contemporaries as Wundt, Nietzsche, Fouillée, Ribot, Guyau, Spencer and Ed. von Hartmann, all of whom he read in the original. He also translated into Russian Kant's *Prolegomena*, Lange's *History of Materialism* and Jodl's *History of Ethics*. No doubt he soon discovered that modern Europe had reached an intellectual impasse, as his *Crisis of Western Philosophy* makes plain; but he realized at the same time that it was henceforth impossible to ignore or neglect the legacy of Descartes and Kant. In the course of his development he encountered a succession of modern thinkers whose systems he at first admired, then assessed more critically and finally rejected in cases where they held untenable positions; but he always showed gratitude for the valuable insights which he had gained from the study of modern philosophy—particularly that branch which carried forward to its natural conclusion the Idealist side of the Cartesian dualism. As Muckermann points out, Solovyov speaks largely the language of the Idealist tradition and it is in the same language that he formulates his own philosophic ideas.

Solovyov's 'first philosophic love' was 'that God-intoxicated man', Spinoza, whose exalted spirituality and ethical earnestness played so decisive a part in helping the young Russian Nihilist to overcome the positivist, materialistic and atheistic outlook of the 'sixties and 'seventies. He admitted later that he was indebted to Spinoza not only from a philosophical, but also from a religious point of view. The quest for a philosophy not merely partial or fragmentary, but adequate to the totality of being; the primacy of *scientia intuitiva* or the direct knowledge of all things including ultimately the Divine Essence; the placing of man's blessedness in the 'intellectual love of God'—all these features of Spinozism so impressed Solovyov that they marked the first stage of his evolution towards religious faith. Above all, Spinoza's conception of the Divinity (at once *causa sui* and *causa omnium rerum*, the infinite Unity of all being, the one, all-embracing Substance) was to provide a rational basis for Solovyov's own mystic intuition of 'unitotality' or 'panunity'. God is the 'all in all', the *omnium esse*, and beyond Him nothing is real. The world is in God, and we can know it and ourselves only by and through Him. Within the abso-

lute Unity are pantheistically merged all distinctions of finite and infinite, matter and spirit, nature and God. Solovyov defended Spinoza against facile charges of atheism, and he argued that the doctrine of God as a unique Substance is necessary to any monotheistic creed. On the other hand, Solovyov came to realize that Spinoza's conception of the Divine Substance was essentially static and allowed no place for historical becoming. In short, Spinoza supplied Solovyov with his Absolute; but the latter had to look elsewhere for the 'Other'.

In regard to modern French thought, Solovyov made a special study of three philosophers—Malebranche, Maine de Biran and Auguste Comte. The Oratorian Malebranche was an ardent disciple of Descartes who, though restrained by Catholic tradition, was quickly charged with 'Spinozism' because of his unconsciously 'rationalizing', near-pantheist approach. The mind, according to Malebranche, apprehends the world only through the intermediary of a third being—God—who contains within Himself all thoughts and things. This conception of God as the mirror in which we behold ourselves and the outer world may have suggested Solovyov's own epistemological theory that true knowledge resides in the whole unitotal Being which relates subject and object. The introspective Maine de Biran ushered in the 'spiritualist' reaction against eighteenth-century materialism; but what must have most influenced Solovyov in Maine de Biran was, no doubt, the latter's subtle investigation of human psychology and human knowledge. However, the most important French influence upon Solovyov was that of Comte. True, Solovyov soon saw through the inadequacies of Positivism; but he long retained the Comtist faith in progress and he always approved of Comte's stress upon the practical object of philosophy and upon the social nature of man. He was, moreover, particularly interested by the Comtist religion of Humanity. For Comte humanity is a collective being which in the course of development becomes absolute: the *Grand-Etre* is a temporal Absolute, an Absolute in potency. According to Solovyov, Comte failed to realize that this temporal Absolute postulates the existence of an eternal Absolute, though by attributing a feminine character to Humanity, Comte may have obscurely sensed the need for a first Absolute. So that while Solovyov found the idea of his second Absolute in Comte's *Grand-Etre* he supplemented it by that of the first Absolute suggested by Spinoza's unique Substance. Furthermore, the Comtist *Grand-*

*Etre* contains within itself all particular beings past, present and future; it possesses a personality of its own; it is the Goddess of Humanity, the object of man's affection, service and worship. Thus considered, Comte's *Grand-Etre* seemed to Solovyov a rationalization of the Sophia which had already been depicted in a naïver but fuller form in the Novgorodian iconography and which he had himself experienced in his mystic visions.<sup>1</sup>

However, Solovyov was less indebted to the French than to the Germans. The Critical Philosophy of Kant, in particular, was a major experience for him. Kant's analysis of the human mind was a remarkable achievement, and though Solovyov did not accept it as definitive, it had clearly to be reckoned with. The philosopher who had professed a supreme reverence for the starry heavens above and the moral law within appealed deeply to the ethical earnestness of Solovyov himself who, though clearly aware of the bleakness and negativeness of the Kantian conception of Duty, was nevertheless much impressed by such notions as the 'Kingdom of Ends' and the 'Categorical Imperative'. Nor can Solovyov have failed to note how Kant considered the idea of the Church to be the foundation of the Kingdom of God and how he explicitly identified the Son of Man with Humanity, i.e. that ideal of Humanity in which all men should strive to be incorporated.

Apart from Kant, Solovyov was also interested in those German Pre-romantic philosophers (e.g. Hamann, Herder, Jacobi, Lavater, Jung-Stilling) whose visionary speculation ran counter to the spirit of the Enlightenment. Goethe, in particular, had gone to the same sources as Solovyov; and in Goethe's pantheistic philosophy Solovyov admired the superb Romantic expression of several congenial notions like '*das Ewig-Weibliche*', the '*Weltseele*' and nature conceived as '*der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid*'. The theosophy of the Gnostics, Neoplatonists, Cabalists, Renaissance nature mystics and Boehme fused with Spinozism to assume a more subjective, anguished and post-Kantian form in the Pre-romantic and Romantic *Naturphilosophie*. To these sources Solovyov owes not only the pursuit of 'universalism' and the idea of the 'organic', but also that taste for vast, fantastic cosmogonies

<sup>1</sup> Cf. d'Herbigny: 'I would gladly believe,' said Solovyov, 'that Comte was employed by Providence to detach the minds of his contemporaries from materialism, and to draw their attention to two essential truths of Christianity—viz.: the survival of the dead who are destined to rise again and the vocation of all men to theandrim, i.e. participation in Divinity' (*VI. Soloviev*, pp. 90–91).

which are such an embarrassment to some religious apologists.<sup>1</sup> There are, moreover, countless analogies of Solovyov's ideas even in such minor Romantic philosophers as Steffens, J. J. Wagner, Passavant, Oken, Troxler, C. G. von Carus, G. H. von Schubert, Karl Krause and, above all, Franz von Baader.<sup>2</sup>

A Catholic admirer of Eckhart, Paracelsus and Boehme, Baader was remarkable for his belief in the destiny of Russia as mediator between East and West as well as for his defence of the theocratic idea. What specially connects him with Solovyov is his development of the Boehmist doctrine of Sophia. The Hindus, he claims, had known it as 'Maya', the Greeks as 'Idea' and the Hebrews as 'Sophia'. Within the universal organism there are two forces working for unity and order—the active Logos and the passive Sophia. Sophia is for Baader a personified entity, identifiable with the Divine Idea or Ideal Humanity. A. Koyré<sup>3</sup> hastens to conclude that it is from Baader that Solovyov borrowed his Sophianic doctrine, his account of the Logos and his general amalgam of mystic theosophy, German Romanticism and Catholicism. But it appears quite incontrovertible that Solovyov's own ideas were already formed before he ever read Baader, though no doubt Baader's ideas confirmed and reinforced his own.

Of the major representatives of German Idealism, however, the outstanding influence upon Solovyov was his favourite Schelling, especially the later, mystical Schelling. The repudiation of abstract rationalism (*Die Krisis der Vernunftwissenschaft*); the possibility of a direct intellectual intuition of the Absolute; the necessary *Selbstrepräsentation* of the Absolute in its 'Gegenbild' or 'Other'; the conception of the Divinity as a synthesis of *reine Gottheit* and *jenes Andere*; the account of the *Abfall der Idee*, the origin of the cosmos and the aspiration of the 'Weltseele' to restore the material universe to its eternal unity with God; the distinction of the three successive stages of Christianity: the Petrine or Catholicism, the Pauline or Protestantism and the Johannine or the religion of the future—all these ideas of Schelling left a profound mark upon Solovyov's philosophy; while even the Russian's style recalls the mystical luminosity, the warm colour and the poetical Romanticism of Schelling. 'No doubt,' observes Kozhev-

<sup>1</sup> All this Romantic bric-à-brac was not jettisoned until Solovyov's last apocalyptic years; but in extenuation Muckermann points out that Dante's *Divina Commedia* also contains all sorts of strange 'ballast', while even in the *Summae* of the mediaeval Schoolmen there are certain pages which can without loss be quietly skipped over. . . .

<sup>2</sup> Vide A. Béguin, *L'Âme romantique et le rêve*.

<sup>3</sup> *La Philosophie de J. Boehme*.

nikov, 'not all Solovyov's ideas can be traced back to those of Schelling; but his agreements with the latter are nevertheless so profound that it can be confidently asserted that his *Weltanschauung* presupposes Schelling's philosophy or at any rate signifies nothing fundamentally and essentially new in comparison with it.'<sup>1</sup>

As for Hegelianism, Solovyov professed to regard it like Schelling as the culmination and dead-end of Western abstract rationalism. None the less Hegel's dialectic, his Trinitarian doctrine and his attempt to grasp the whole movement of the ages as one all-embracing revelation of the spirit have left their impression upon Solovyov's own system. Moreover, Gössmann ascribes to Hegelianism the strong pantheistic streak which runs through the doctrine of Godmanhood; 'A certain pantheistic trait accompanied him all through his life; but it sprang more from unconscious exaggeration than from conscious intention'.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, reference must be made to Solovyov's interest in the more literary German philosophers. Schopenhauer, for example, strengthened Solovyov's sympathy for Eastern religion and mysticism; but his pessimistic doctrine convinced the young Solovyov of the vanity of science and fostered the painful consciousness ever lurking beneath the surface of Solovyov's optimism that 'the world is seated in wickedness'. As for Ed. von Hartmann, Solovyov was impressed by the latter's attempted synthesis of speculative Idealism and natural science; indeed, he saw in Hartmann and in Schopenhauer the welcome return of Western thought to the religious and contemplative truth of the East.

Nietzsche, on the other hand, at once fascinated and repelled Solovyov. The *Übermensch* or Godmanhood—that was the vital issue between the two. '*Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen*', Zarathustra had proclaimed. A dangerous half-truth; for though St. Paul had taught the Athenians that man must be more than man, Nietzsche substitutes for the God-man a fake superman. 'Slaves may adore a God who became man and humbled himself,' sneers Nietzsche; 'but the strong refuse to adore anything but their own elevation towards the superman; in other words, the infinite advancement of human beauty, human grandeur and human power.' But, replies Solovyov, 'the Nietzschean supermen are subject to the common law of death: They end in the grave—what beauty is there in a corpse? . . . Can any power be worthy of the name that cannot resist death?' The attempt to separate strength and beauty

<sup>1</sup> *Die Geschichtsphilosophie Wl. Solovjeffs*, p. 2.    <sup>2</sup> *Der Kirchenbegriff bei Wl. Solovjefff*.

from goodness will always prove impossible. 'It dies with every dead man; it lies buried in every cemetery.' Christianity, on the contrary, is not a religion of mourning, as Nietzsche supposed, but a supreme revelation of resurrection and life everlasting. 'Do death and resurrection affect only certain classes? Are Nietzsche and his supermen not liable to death? Before condemning the Christian doctrine of equality, he would have to abolish the equality of all men in death.' Nevertheless, Nietzsche's philosophy was gaining ground among the Russian aesthetes and symbolists of the 'nineties —e.g. Briusov, Merezhkovsky, Rozanov, and their organ, the *Mir Iskusstva*. This appeal of the Nietzschean superman seemed to Solovyov yet another sure sign of the near approach of Antichrist.

## IV

It remains to trace the Catholic influences which also played their part in the elaboration of Solovyov's philosophy, especially during the theocratic period in the 'eighties. His study of the history of the early Church brought him into contact not only with the Greek Fathers, but also with such Latin Fathers as Tertullian, St. Cyprian and, above all, St. Augustine, with whom he must have felt a certain spiritual kinship. There was the same background of a tottering Empire, the same early 'God-struggling', the same spiritual illumination attributed by the one to Plotinus and by the other to Spinoza, and finally, the same preoccupation with the relationship between the City of God and the earthly city. At the same time, Solovyov was initiated into later Catholic thought by his friendship with Princess Volkonsky and her circle, Canon Rački and Bishop Strossmayer of Zagreb, Frs. Gagarin, Martynov and Pierling of Paris. He felt a growing sense of the mystical reality of the Universal Church and the inescapable recognition of the spiritual primacy of the Papacy in the Christian world. However, the Russian still remained the faithful knight of Sophia whose meaning he seems to have fused with the Catholic veneration of the Blessed Virgin and with the Catholic doctrine of the Mystical Body.

Dante and Petrarch he discovered with a special delight because of the obvious analogies between his own Sophianic cult and their mystical apotheosis of Beatrice and Laura as exquisite types of supernatural glory. Solovyov translated into Russian part of Dante's *Vita Nuova* as well as Petrarch's hymn to Our Lady in

which the sun-clad, star-crowned Virgin is described as 'the radiant eye of the Infinite'. Through Dante, Solovyov was introduced into the whole religious world of mediaeval Europe. Dante's exquisite spirituality, the austere, lonely grandeur of his life and the prophetic quality of his *Divina Commedia* profoundly impressed Solovyov. It may also be pointed out that Solovyov's idea of a universal theocracy was greatly stimulated by the treatise *De Monarchia* in which Dante sets up beside the ideal of the Universal Church that of a *universalis civilitas humani generis*, but there is an important difference between the two men. Solovyov tends to subordinate the imperial power to that of the Papacy, whereas Dante declares that the Emperor derives his power directly from God and not through the Church, so that though he owes the Pope the respect due from the first-born to his father, he nevertheless enjoys a real independence in the political order, like the *optimus homo* within the moral sphere or the Pope in the spiritual realm.<sup>1</sup>

Another Catholic author who inevitably influenced Solovyov was the former Sardinian Minister to St. Petersburg, Joseph de Maistre. Solovyov seems to have read, not without profit, de Maistre's views on Catholic theocracy, on the Papacy, on the reunion of the Churches and, in particular, on the conversion of Russia. However, there was a wide gulf between them. Solovyov as a Liberal could hardly have relished de Maistre's political authoritarianism, while the latter's cruel harshness and cold brilliance must have repelled the kinder, more mystical Solovyov. He once recalls with satisfaction the reply of Tsar Alexander I to de Maistre: '*Tout ceci est très bien, M. le Comte, mais il y a dans le Christianisme quelque chose qui va plus loin.*'

However, the most decisive of all Catholic influences upon Solovyov came from Slavonic Europe. Here the outstanding figure was the Croat priest, Yuri Krijanić, whose ardent Catholic Slavophilism had already blazed a trail for Solovyov. A Slav patriot, he has been called 'the first of the Slavophiles'; but his travels in seventeenth-century Muscovy had opened his eyes to the very real shortcomings of the Russian scene. Indeed he called for economic and political reforms as well as for a policy of westernization which may possibly have influenced the programme of Peter the Great. Nor did he share the Slavophil vision of Moscow the Third Rome. 'If Russia deserved this title,' he said, 'it would be one of

<sup>1</sup> Vide Gilson, *Dante et la philosophie*, pp. 181-90.

the three heads of the Beast of the Apocalypse.' None the less, Križanić firmly believed that, despite the Schism into which they had fallen through accident or ignorance, the Russian Christians remained bound to the Universal Church by patriotic tradition, the sacraments and the apostolic succession. Well aware how deeply the observance of the Eastern rite and the use of the Slavonic tongue were rooted in the Russian religious consciousness, Križanić opposed all attempts to 'latinize' Russian Christianity. Above all, he prophesied that Russia was destined to reunite all the Slav world and to expiate their sin of schism by reconciling the Latin and Greek Churches. It is uncertain whether Križanić's ideas directly influenced Solovyov, or whether they reached him indirectly in the form of an established tradition—perhaps through the intermediary of his friend, Bishop Strossmayer of Zagreb. A sturdy champion of all the Slav peoples, Orthodox as well as Catholic, Strossmayer considered that the Greeks had been far more responsible for the Great Schism than the Slavs. He bore a special love for Holy Russia as yet little ravaged by modern Western thought. He seems to have felt that Tsar Alexander III was to play a great part in the reunion of the Churches and that the Russian Empire was to provide for the Church of the future a political framework comparable to that of Constantine and Charlemagne in the past. All these ideas were to find their culmination in Solovyov's magnificent but ironic words on Christian reunion in *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*:

Two centuries ago a Croat priest prophetically announced this, and in our day a bishop of the same nation has proclaimed it many times with admirable eloquence. What has been said by the representatives of the Western Slavs, the great Križanić and the great Strossmayer, needed only a simple amen on the part of the Eastern Slavs. This amen I have just spoken in the name of the hundred million Russian Christians, with the firm and utter confidence that they will not disavow me.

To the influence of Križanić and Strossmayer must be added that of the brilliant Russian intellectual Chaadaev who, though never formally a Catholic, was a notorious advocate of Catholicism in Russia around 1830 and whose *Lettres Philosophiques* precipitated the famous debate between Westerners and Slavophiles. No doubt the starting points of Chaadaev and Solovyov are somewhat dissimilar. For Chaadaev, Russia's intermediary

position between West and East was not a supreme opportunity, but a crippling impoverishment :

Belonging to none of the great families of the human race, we are not included in the West or in the East and we possess the cultural tradition of neither.

Then again, continues Chaadyaev, Russia has remained outside history because it has received an *idée défigurée* of Christianity in the form of Byzantinism and has subsequently languished in unproductive sterility outside the creative Catholic culture of Europe :

We live in the present alone, in the most narrow limits, without a past and without a future, in a state of dead stagnation. Ideas of duty, right, justice live in Europe. She has built the temple of civilization.

Naturally Chaadyaev's entirely negative attitude to the Russian past and present runs counter to Solovyov's outlook. Moreover, as Quénet points out, there is for Chaadyaev no question of Godmanhood or of a *Corps-Eglise*.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless they still retain very much in common. Both were isolated thinkers persecuted by their contemporaries, and accused of being poseurs, renegades, or even traitors. Their thought also presents many resemblances—the same religious interpretation of human history; the stress upon the importance of Catholicism and the Papacy; Russian Christianity considered as an impure alliance of temporal (i.e. Byzantine) forms with the eternal essence of the Church; the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, an ideal of Western Christianity already partially realized in the Middle Ages; and the need to re-integrate Russia within the universal unity of Catholicism. In the latter part of his life Chaadyaev seems to have foreseen a possible transformation of modern Europe by the infusion of Russian ascetism. The Russians, he felt, 'are called to solve most of the problems of the social order, to consummate most of the ideas which arose in the old societies and to pronounce upon the gravest questions which preoccupy the human mind'. It is

<sup>1</sup> 'Son "Royaume de Dieu" était composé de faits terrestres produits par une idée divine, non de faits et d'hommes terrestro-célestes et divino-humains. Il y a chez lui une physique et une métaphysique, des faits et une idée, unis mais distincts. Il est pragmatique et logique, même lorsqu'il s'engage dans le messianisme russe. . . . Il se distingue de Soloviev, bien qu'il l'annonce en plusieurs points' (*Chaadyaev*, pp. 402-3).

most improbable, however, that Solovyov was personally inspired by Chaadyaev's ideas; indeed he only read him for the first time in 1887. Their likeness of outlook reveals, as Quénet remarks, 'less an influence than an affinity between two similar minds, two men akin in certain respects'.<sup>1</sup>

Before leaving the subject of Solovyov's Catholicism, it is perhaps still necessary to comment upon the title of the 'Russian Newman' first attached to Solovyov by d'Herbigny's work and the source of some irritation among non-Catholic scholars. There is in fact no question of a direct influence of Newman upon Solovyov; but even as a description it is highly misleading. If the totally different religious and national background be ignored, there are of course various superficial resemblances between the Russian and the Englishman:

Each possessed the soul of a philosopher, each was an intuitive theologian, an artist and a scholar; each had deep affections and perfect purity. Their tastes seem to have been identical; they both loved Holy Scripture and the Fathers, especially St. Augustine; both studied ecclesiastical history and the philosophy of religious development: both strove to raise human knowledge to God, and to inculcate the daily duties of religion. Both, even before their conversion, pledged themselves to perpetual celibacy; both were impelled to sacrifice earthly friendships that they might follow Christ; both were so passionately enamoured of their country and the Catholic Church as to offer themselves to undergo any sufferings if only a reconciliation could be effected between these objects of their love.<sup>2</sup>

No doubt this *rapprochement* is, so far as it goes, fair; though it needs to be radically modified in the light of more recently disclosed evidence of the erotic tinge in Solovyov's character and mysticism. What, however, most decisively weakens this comparison with Newman is the fact which d'Herbigny omits to mention—Solovyov's lasting attachment to heterodox, theosophical speculation and the serious ambiguity of his ecclesiastical allegiance. The fundamental divergence between the two is Newman's dogged loyalty to the Catholic Church in the face of all trials and Solovyov's later estrangement from the 'institutional element' in religion.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 399.

<sup>2</sup> d'Herbigny, *Soloviev*, pp. 31-32.

## V

An investigation of Solovyov's sources must necessarily bring out the immense scope and heterogeneous character of Solovyov's reading. 'He applied himself to very various subjects,' writes d'Herbigny, 'and his powers never seemed to fail, though his modesty and his affability continued unchanged. The extent of his knowledge did not prejudice his accuracy, and the wide field of his studies neither overwhelmed nor concealed his personality; he was at once a scholar and a thinker.'<sup>1</sup> However, some scholars, even Russians, have repudiated Solovyov's title to distinctive originality as a philosopher. No doubt he is commonly and rightly called the greatest Russian philosopher; but, says Mirsky, 'he cannot in any sense be put on a level with the world's greatest philosophers, and in a universal history of philosophy, he may be overlooked'.<sup>2</sup> He is interesting and significant, but he is not a thinker of the first rank. 'Whoever knows the intellectual world of Europeans, especially German philosophy,' observes Kozhevnikov, 'will discover in Solovyov nothing essentially new, no entirely original *Weltanschauung*.'<sup>3</sup> However, whatever Solovyov's debt may be in the realm of formal philosophy, he occupies a distinguished place in the tradition of the great nineteenth-century visionaries like Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky or Léon Bloy. His thought is essentially modern—i.e. subjective, intimate, *vécue*: and his abiding appeal lies less in his philosophical formulations than in his strangely fascinating personality. Hence, like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bergson, he has exerted a more powerful influence upon literature and upon the intelligentsia generally than upon subsequent philosophy.

Above all, his philosophical speculation was primarily concerned to supply a rational foundation for his mystic communion with his Eternal Friend. After Solovyov's death the literary executors found that his papers were covered with notes interspersed with strange passages of what appeared to be automatic writing signed 'S' or 'Sophia'. Andrey Bely declared that these passages reminded one of a love affair; but it would not be too exaggerated to say that Solovyov's whole philosophy was a sort of 'love correspondence'.

<sup>1</sup> Soloviev, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Russian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Geschichtsphilosophie* We. Solovjeffs, p. 1.

# PROFESSOR TRILLING AND THE 'NEW CRITICS'

By W. W. ROBSON

WHEN Mr. Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* came out in this country, intelligent comment here chiefly concerned itself either with the essays on particular literary topics, respectfully noting the integrated vision, the firmly critical bent, which controls those studies of Tacitus, of Scott Fitzgerald, of Kipling, of *Huckleberry Finn*; or with those parts of the book clearly composed with a certain stratum of the American 'liberal' public in mind—those parts where Mr. Trilling, as befitted the biographer and interpreter of Matthew Arnold, was applying to American liberal humanism its appropriate critique from within. His thoughts flow together, his preoccupations converge; and perhaps it is wrong to pick out his individual remarks on literature, and on our experience of literature, without considering them in that context of specific moral, political, and psychological study of the contemporary cultural situation from which they originally emerged. But certain remarks of his have, I think, a general importance which can be brought out without our having to scrutinize Mr. Trilling's main purpose: his desire, through intellection guided by insights from below, to purify and subtly to strengthen our will to be civilized. Certainly if we have no interest, no sense of involvement, in that purpose, an inquiry into criticism's theoretic matters will seem rootless and vain; but granted this sense of involvement, such an inquiry, which will leave behind, in its ascent to a zone of greater abstraction, Mr. Trilling's specific terms of reference, may in the end bring us back to them with a purer intention and a sharper zest.

Discussions about the theoretical basis of literary criticism seem to be valuable and thorough in direct proportion to the degree of importance which the disputants attach to the practice of criticism. Thus crude or extremist theories are, on the whole, held only by those whose primary interests do not lie in the

literary field, and who are only incidentally concerned with the 'aesthetic' domain for the sake of giving completeness of application and articulateness to some general philosophical theory. The most useful hints for the *débutant* in aesthetics have as a result come either from practising critics or from creative artists; the supremely useful, perhaps, from those who combine both capacities without confusing the one region of intellection with the other. (I am thinking of the early critical work of T. S. Eliot.) This is not surprising. The most intensive, the most close and practical, the most 'living' instance of criticism, as Mr. Eliot is fond of reminding us, is the criticism which the creative artist directs upon his own work in the process of composing it; the critical activity, however rapid and 'unconscious' its application to specific rejections, acceptances, discriminations, is a necessary part (or aspect) of the process of creation. What is more usually called literary criticism is, however, at a further distance from the creative process; and a creative writer need not be a literary critic in this sense at all. He has advantages if he is one, because he knows the creative process from within, he knows (the stock phrase can be used with some force here) what he is talking about; and literary criticism is a field in which to know what one is talking about is half the battle. But literary criticism, of this second and subsidiary kind, is not a quasi-creative process, an outlet for the writer's creative energy to release itself with somewhat diminished intensity. It is not therefore convenient to regard criticism as an element in the creative process which can be separated so as to function on its own over some more 'abstract' material than the artist deals with; and, in so far as Mr. Eliot has ever seemed to suggest this, I think he was mistaken. For this view in practice may easily become confounded with a view of criticism as some sort of parody of or substitute for creation. And certainly in some cases of quasi-creative 'criticism' one may see either the self-thwarting (because of an error about purpose and procedure) of the writer's creative impulse, or the dangerous efforts of a writer without creative impulse to achieve some similitude of original creation at the expense of the texts he is purporting to 'discuss'.

I think Mr. E. M. Forster has in mind this sort of 'criticism', and is mistakenly identifying it with genuine criticism, when in his latest book he remarks: 'Criticism cannot take us to the heart of the arts, which is mysterious.' Or again: 'The critical state is grotesquely remote from the state responsible for the works it

affects to expound.' Why 'grotesquely' and 'affects to expound'? The censorious note is plain: yet, for those who have a correct understanding of the nature of literary criticism, there can be no desirable asperity of relationship between the literary critic and the creative artist. Their purposes do not clash, because they do not come into contact at the same level. But to justify this assertion requires more particularity of demonstration; and I shall try presently to offer this, taking as my starting-point some remarks of Mr. Trilling's about criticism.

I should like to add, however, some observations on a reference made above. Since Mr. Forster is now the *doyen* of the English literary world, and perhaps our leading cultural mentor ('civilized' for many, and not the least influential, applies to that conduct and attitude Mr. Forster approves, 'uncivilized' to that he disapproves); and since he has been a major creative artist, and, as critic of literature and society, ranks with Arnold and Freud among Mr. Trilling's inspirers, it seems a pity that he should lend his influence to what might seem a disparaging view of such criticism. For in reaction from that view one might be tempted to retort that there is something suspicious when a glamour of ideality is shed upon 'tolerance': that this 'amused urbanity', this much-praised 'geniality', this 'good humour', can in some cases be a smile of Hippocrates, proceeding not from kindness but from *post-mortem* relaxation of the muscles. But certainly a grim look of preoccupied moral strenuousness does not become the critic either; it can inhibit or harden his touch, not only on literature and art, but on questions of *moeurs* and of morals. The late Irving Babbitt is a case in point: thus it is hard not to perceive, in his indignant denial of moral value to the Ancient Mariner's blessing the water-snakes (the moment, for him, was valueless because it had no 'inner check'), the same native tough insentience of mental fibre that denied him much contact with literature and art. And, if it might be risky to say that the literary critic should not take himself too seriously, it certainly would be safe to say that he should not take himself too solemnly. Solemnity is to seriousness what deference is to respect; the solemn may merge into the trivial, the deferential into the insulting, or each may co-exist with its apparent opposite, more easily than one might at first suppose: respect and seriousness have, by contrast, a surer poise. To assume that criticism should have just this poise is then to assume that there exist other alternatives to an endless flounder-

ing in the sweet-smelling morass of impressionism than either a jaunty parade of skill or an austerity drier than the desert.

That Mr. Trilling's criticism has the stipulated quality, whether he is discussing the Kinsey Report or the 'neurotic' theory of art or the work of the late Theodore Dreiser, it does not take much reading of *The Liberal Imagination* to discover. He is not the contemporary Irving Babbitt. Nor is the grace of his writing a new version of the elegant insensitiveness of a critic like Paul Elmer More. I think it will very soon appear that this is not merely a 'literary' judgement when I turn, as I now do, to Mr. Trilling's reflexions on a kind of American academicism which is in these days a more urgent piece of reality than the academicism of Babbitt or More: in fact, the New Criticism. The essays of Mr. Trilling which are chiefly relevant here, and which those interested should look up, are *The Sense of the Past* and *The Meaning of a Literary Idea*. As for the New Criticism, its nature, scope and limitations will perhaps appear, at least negatively, in my discussion of Mr. Trilling's remarks. It will be as well, however, to say at once that one must always be aware of, and sympathetic to (as Mr. Trilling clearly is), what is admirable and noble in the endeavour of the New Critics. There is certainly something admirable in their American optimism, their confidence in techniques of expansion and assimilation which will function with ever and ever increasing sureness; just as there is something noble in their disinterestedness, their concern for the 'purity' of literature, their insistence upon its intrinsic importance in a world which grows day by day more terribly inimical. But even what is *réussi*, what is locally convincing (and that is far from being everything), in the work of the New Criticism has grave limitations. And these limitations have something to do with the weaknesses in its theoretic basis: manifested empirically in what is suspect, or limited, or crippled and crippling, in its *modus operandi*. And one fears that in consequence the supersession by the New Criticism, in some distinguished American places of learning, of the Old Pedantry, cannot be counted an altogether unmixed blessing. Let us hear Mr. Trilling mildly but firmly pointing out, in two different contexts, something dubious in the New Critics' dogma of the 'purity' of literature and of the 'literary' experience.

In their [the New Critics'] reaction from the historical method they forget that the literary work is ineluctably a historical fact,

and, what is more important, that its historicity is a fact in our aesthetic experience. . . . Even in the lyric poem the factor of historicity is part of the aesthetic experience; it is not merely a negative condition of the other elements, such as prosody or diction, which, if they are old enough, are likely to be insufficiently understood—it is itself a positive aesthetic factor with positive and pleasurable relation to the other factors. It is part of the *given* of the work, which we cannot help but respond to. The New Critics imply that this situation *should* not exist, but it cannot help existing, and we have to take it into account.<sup>1</sup>

The aesthetic effect of intellectual cogency, I am convinced, is not to be slighted. Let me give an example for what it is worth. . . .

We had fed the heart on fantasies,  
The heart's grown brutal from the fare. (Yeats.)

I am hard put to account for the force of the statement. It certainly does not lie in any metaphor, for only the dimmest sort of metaphor is to be detected. Nor does it lie in any special power of the verse. The statement has for me the pleasure of relevance and cogency, in part conveyed to me by the content, in part by the rhetoric.<sup>2</sup>

(After the second extract Mr. Trilling adds that he finds it difficult to distinguish the kind of pleasure he got from the Yeats couplet from that he got, at about the same time, in reading Freud's last book, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*.) Let us, for the purpose of this discussion, assume that the New Criticism is a homogeneous body of critical writing. Mr. Trilling's remarks (for he has the New Critics clearly in mind in the second extract also) suggest that they disregard (a) 'historicity', i.e. our immediate and given sense of the date of the given poem—using 'poem' for 'work of imaginative literature' in general and (b) 'intellectual cogency' and 'relevance' as factors which operate to give us pleasure in reading the given poem. What I want to consider is, what is to be 'regarded' or 'disregarded' in good literary criticism; and hence to see Mr. Trilling's strictures (whether they are sound or not in their particular application) in a more general context. And this, it is clear, will involve discussing what literary criticism is; and this in turn will involve discussing, at a yet more fundamental level, what 'literature' is.

'Literature' exists: without this assumption there can be no literary criticism. How much are we granting when we grant that 'literature' exists? The New Critics, I think, would answer that

<sup>1</sup> *The Sense of the Past*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Meaning of a Literary Idea*.

we are granting a good deal; for it is on the peculiar, and richly complex, status they ascribe to 'literature' that a good deal of their justification of their procedure depends. Let us then first consider what, in commonplace uses, our assumption that 'literature' exists comes to. We are assuming that 'literature' exists when we talk of such-and-such a work as having 'purely (or only) literary value', when we use an expression like 'from the literary point of view', or, more subtly, when we assert that a suitably prepared reader can enjoy Dante's *Comedy* without 'believing in' the Catholic religion or the philosophy of Aristotle. And perhaps what we are granting in this commonplace assumption might be refined into something like the following: 'There exists a certain kind of verbal communication which claims of its nature a certain mode of attention from the person to whom it is communicated.' This refinement does not, of course, get one very far, or indeed anywhere, since 'claims of its nature' and 'a certain mode of attention' beg all the questions. My point, however, in putting our assumption in these terms will be clearer when I go on to assert that those who believe in the possibility, and ideal separability from other kinds of experience, of the 'literary' experience (like the New Critics), also believe, as we can infer from their practice, that this mode of attention (*a*) is unique and (*b*) can, in the process of practical literary criticism, be distinguished from other modes of attention with which it may be wholly compatible, or partly compatible or incompatible. (So, if Mr. Trilling is right when he charges the New Critics with ignoring 'historicity' and 'intellectual cogency', they are probably disclaiming these factors as demanding a mode of attention with which 'the right' mode is incompatible.) Now it is not my purpose to attack the view that 'literature' *per se* claims a special or unique mode of attention, nor the derivative view that there is such a thing as 'purely literary' experience. Rather, I wish to show that not much is in fact granted when these assumptions are granted, certainly not much that can help the literary critic to decide what his job is or how to do it; and that the New Critics, in staking so much on the notion of 'pure literature', have committed their critical method in advance to a limitation which partly empties it of utility. And in doing so I wish to strike a more positive note on what in my view literary criticism, if it is to be a genuinely valuable activity, should be.

Let us consider the sentence (or pair of sentences): 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty.' This is a grammatically correct English

sentence, and, to judge from the amount of controversy (of various kinds) it has provoked, has never appeared to any reader totally senseless; since one cannot offer, or even try to offer, an explanation of an utterance which appears to one totally senseless. But what it was intended to communicate, what it actually does communicate, and what its 'value' is, are clearly difficult questions. How would one attempt to answer these questions? In practical cases of discussion any trained literary critic would insist on referring the sentence back to its context in Keats's poem, and on considering it as part of that poem, before he attempted to answer them. And he might justify this reference to context in this way. Suppose a Marxist reader were to read the sentence '*Beauty is truth, truth beauty*', with the emphasis indicated by my italics, and to claim that it was a statement of the principles of Socialist Realism; and suppose an Aesthete reader were to read it as '*Beauty is truth, truth beauty*', and to claim that it was a statement of the principles of Pure Aestheticism; how could one possibly decide whether either (or neither) was the correct reading (i.e. the reading in accordance with the poet's intention) without reference to context? The sentence itself, the critic might say, will not reveal how it should be read; and, without knowing how it should be read, we cannot interpret it. Now I take it that in this matter of 'reference to context' the ordinary critic and the New Critic would be on common ground; but the New Critic would, I suppose, want to limit 'context' here simply to the given poem, and rule out any resort to the wider context of Keats's work as a whole, of what we know about Keats and about his time, of Keats's use of the words 'truth' and 'beauty' in other poems, or in letters, and so on: at any rate in the preliminary discussion.

In fact, all controversy known to me about the meaning of this sentence has taken it for granted that we cannot decide what the sentence 'means' (i.e. how we are to interpret the poet's intention in using it) other than by deciding what it 'means' in that poem. Now suppose I were to contrast (as has, indeed, been done on more than one occasion) the pseudo-statement '*Beauty is truth, truth beauty*' with the pseudo-statement '*Ripeness is all*'. I might go on to claim (justly or not, it is irrelevant here to discuss) that '*Ripeness is all*' was for me a complete and intelligible utterance, independent of its context, whereas '*Beauty is truth, truth beauty*' was not. In that case I should be maintaining that '*Ripeness is all*' is a complete poem, and therefore the proper term of comparison

would not be 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' but the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. But how would I deal with someone who sincerely maintained that this comparison could not be made, as far as he was concerned, since for him the *Ode* was a complete and intelligible utterance, whereas 'Ripeness is all' was not? I think I would either have to modify my original position somewhat, by admitting that one could only see the meaning of 'Ripeness is all' when one had read *King Lear*, and come upon this line in its context, so that one could only discuss it with (so to speak) *King Lear* as a whole behind it, or, while sticking to 'Ripeness is all' as the only text, attempt to demonstrate to him as many conceivable contexts of living experience as I could to which this line could be felt to 'apply'. But in either case I would not be doing anything very different from what I did when, in order to interpret 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty', I replaced it in its context of Keats's poem. Nor would I be doing anything very different if I dealt with a man who did not find the *Ode* itself, or any obviously self-contained poem, a complete and intelligible utterance, by placing it, with significant indicative emphases, in the context of the poet's whole work, or of possible living experience.

Now it seems to me that in doing this I would be carrying out one function of literary criticism: namely to create conditions of intelligibility for the 'statements' of literature. I would, in fact, be engaged in a conscious, non-autotelic activity, directed towards making it possible for the person being instructed to 'experience' literature. But this is not to be confounded with exegesis or 'explanation'. My only purpose at this stage of criticism is to make the poem be 'there' for him: I have not 'explained' it for him, I have merely given him the state of affairs in which he can explain it for himself. No doubt it could be said that in doing so I have liberated in him a certain mode of attention; a mode, furthermore, in which the value of an utterance is perceived simultaneously with its meaning. And this seems to me true. But it does not follow that the statements which I myself may make in this process themselves demand this mode of attention: and the fact that this is not so disposes of the quasi-creative 'critic'. Nor does it follow that I can lay down what factors *should* govern the operation of this mode of attention: and here the New Critics, in insisting that one must, are open to the objections of Mr. Trilling, and to even wider objections, that they have decided beforehand, and arbitrarily, what 'literary' factors are and what they are not. The New Critics are

in the right as against the quasi-creative 'critics' in emphasizing the directive character of criticism; they are wrong, however, in believing that the method of direction depends upon an exact knowledge of the defining properties of 'literature' and of 'literary' experience. In ensuring complete communication the critic is ensuring evaluation; but he need not know what factors govern either. He knows merely that there are certain 'statements' like 'Ripeness is all' and 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty', and he knows that he must get his pupil to look at them in a certain way before they can be intelligible and valuable to his pupil. And these facts are all that we are granting when we admit that 'There are literary experiences' or that 'Literature exists'.

# RECENT SPANISH NOVELS

By ROBERT BOSC

WHAT do foreigners know of Spanish novels of the past decade? Three years ago *La Familia de Pascual Duarte*,<sup>1</sup> a vigorous story of debauchery and murder by Camillo José Cela, was received by the Paris critics with great praise. Since then scarcely anything has appeared in translation except the two very violent novels by the exiled Spaniard, Arturo Barea, *La Forge* and *La Route*,<sup>2</sup> and the translation of several already well-known works by Pío Baroja and Ramón de Valle-Inclán.<sup>3</sup> The hopes which Carmen Laforet had given of her talent in *Nada*,<sup>4</sup> a story of her student life in Barcelona, have not been fulfilled: the young authoress, from whom so much was expected, has persisted in her silence.

Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui is a wonderful story-teller, but when he aspires to the heights of the great psychological novel he lacks stamina. Zunzunegui is now aged fifty. A disciple of Pío Baroja, he lives in Portugalete, in Biscay. He made his name as a regionalist, but has since extended his observation to various urban societies in his recent works—*La Quiebra*, *La Ulcera*, *Las Ratas del Barco*, *El Supremo Bien*. He is considered one of the most representative novelists of the present generation. His *El Barco de la Muerte*<sup>5</sup> will doubtless seem to foreign taste to be somewhat inadequate in content. The story of this pitiless undertaker who is

<sup>1</sup> The original version dates from 1942. For the convenience of readers who may wish to know of available French translations of works mentioned in this text the relevant French titles and publishers are given. *La Famille de Pascual Duarte* was published by *Les Editions du Seuil* (1948). In his most recent work, *La Colmena* (*The Hive*) Cela accentuates still more the cruelty and crudity of his realism.

<sup>2</sup> Both were first published in translation (French editions 1949).

<sup>3</sup> Pío Baroja and Valle-Inclán both belong to the famous 'generation of 1898'. The Baroja novel referred to was translated in 1949 with the title *L'Apprenti Conspirateur* (*Nouvelles Editions Latines*); and that by Valle-Inclán was the famous series of *Sonatas* (*de Primavera, de Verano, de Otoño, de Invierno*). French title, *Les Amours du Marquis de Bradomin* (Stock, 1950).

<sup>4</sup> Same title in French. *Nada* (Nothing) (Stock, 1950). The original received the Nadal prize, 1944.

<sup>5</sup> The original dates from 1945. French translation *La Dernière Carriole* (Stock, 1950).

accused of having poisoned the spring of his native village to assist his business would have furnished material for an excellent long-short story, but nothing more. The only interesting part of the novel is that which tells retrospectively of the childhood of the hero in a very poor family on the outskirts of Bilbao. In it is seen the very dignified, very courageous poverty of the Spanish people. There is a wonderful portrait of the mother.

If we leave the available translations and proceed to the works which have gained literary prizes in Spain during the past few years we find a number of well-constructed novels; but none, in our opinion, which is outstanding by its originality or genius.

Thirty years ago, in his *Ideas sobre la Novela*, the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset warned the younger novelists against the temptation to seek new subjects in the social or moral problems of our time. 'In a novel,' he wrote, 'our attention ought to be directed to the characters, much more than to their adventures. It is Don Quixote and Sancha who amuse us, not what happens to them. Theoretically one could imagine a *Don Quijote* of equal worth to that of Cervantes, in which quite different adventures could happen to the Knight of the Sad Countenance and his squire. The same applies to Julien Sorel<sup>1</sup> or David Copperfield.'

These are acute reflexions, but in practice they forbid the novelist to echo the transitory anxieties and sufferings of the people among whom he lives. Hence there is no 'social' literature in Spain today. From an artistic standpoint this is no great misfortune, but foreign readers who like to seek in other literatures something more than pure entertainment will be a little disappointed. They will want to discover the contemporary soul of Spain, its life and problems reflected in its literature. Unfortunately most of the new works will give such readers the impression of dealing with hackneyed themes.

In the preface to *Lola, Espejo Oscuro*, Dario Fernandez Florez proclaims that his only aim is to continue the tradition of the picaresque novel. 'The background of this story and the life of the heroine,' he writes, 'are the very same as those which once gave rise to one of the most glorious periods of our literature, modified only by the difference of eras.' Lola is a foundling who grows up like a wild flower in the company of picturesque gypsies. Her beauty quickly makes her 'the most expensive' *cocotte* in Madrid. The tragic events of 1936-39 leave this frivolous creature com-

<sup>1</sup> In Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*.

pletely unaffected. Only when the passing years make it harder for her to keep her admirers does she come to wonder anxiously whether she is perhaps only 'waste land' despite her beauty. Her lover tells her one day, 'Your beauty, liberty and strength are intoxicating. You are like the rain, the wind, the snow; burning hot like summer noon, icy as winter night, tender as a sunset. You can be absolutely everything—except a woman.'<sup>1</sup>

One of the great successes of 1950 was *La Vida Nueva de Pedrito de Andia* by Rafael Sanchez Mazas. The book was hailed by so good a critic as Gregorio Marañón as 'a great novel, universal and enduring'.<sup>2</sup> Pedrito is aged fifteen. He comes to Bilbao on holiday from the Jesuit college where he is a pupil. He meets a former playmate, Isabel, whom he loves very much. Isabel now seems to disdain him for his slight stature. Pedrito passes the summer in a feverish torture of spirit, so much so that he falls ill. He is sent into the Basque countryside for his convalescence. Tía Clara, the old aunt who nurses him, has been involved in her youth in the adventures of the Carlist war and Pedrito's imagination takes fire at these reminiscences. Apart from the last chapter, which consists of a somewhat 'story-book' reconciliation between Pedrito and Isabel, *La Vida Nueva de Pedrito de Andia* is a very sensitive analysis of adolescent passion. The freshness and simplicity of the Basque country scenes, the evocation of the struggles between the Liberals and the Traditionalists in the nineteenth century, imbue the narrative with the note of poetry exactly suited to it.

It seems to be one of the characteristics of the contemporary Spanish novel to aim much less at sociological observation than at poetry and even lyricism. According to Ortega y Gasset the good novelist should seek first to create an 'atmosphere'; unlike the short-story writer, he should interest himself in 'contemplation' rather than action, and should attempt to imprison us in a 'hermetically sealed' world where outside preoccupations cease to reach or trouble us.

If one accepts this orientation of the novel towards poetry, *La Vida Nueva de Pedrito de Andia* is a masterpiece. To quote Gregorio Marañón again, 'the best novel which has been published in Spain for many years'. By this criterion one must also give a high

<sup>1</sup> *Lola, Espejo Oscuro* (Editorial Plenitud, Madrid, 1950). It is possible that a novel dealing with such loose morality may have been authorized in contemporary Spain because the author is one of the official censorship committee.

<sup>2</sup> *Correo Literario*, 15 March, 1951.

place to *Viento del Norte*, a Galician regionalist novel for which Elena Quiroga received the 1950 Nadal prize.<sup>1</sup> In an isolated farm in Galicia, the extreme point of Europe, on the ancient pilgrim route to Saint James of Compostella, a little girl has been taken in out of charity. As she grows up she awakens in the heart of the farmer, an elderly widower, a new sentiment which is no longer simply paternal affection. They marry and are not happy. It is not a new theme: but the mountains, coasts and creeks of Galicia form a wonderful background to this very simple and human story, told with feminine delicacy.

The only writer who does not mingle the novel and lyricism and has the courage to deal with absolutely contemporary themes is Manuel Pombo Angulo, born in 1912 in Santander and by profession a neurologist. His first major novel, *Hospital General* (1948), depicted Germans and Spaniards whose destinies were interwoven. His *Sin Patria*,<sup>2</sup> which obtained the 1950 National Prize for the Novel, tells the story of a young Spanish Socialist from the Asturias. After the defeat of his unit in the Civil War Juan takes refuge in France. He is interned in a camp and the Landes district: soon sickened by this experience he volunteers for work in Germany. With a technique which has some similarities to that of Dos Passos' novels, the author then describes at length the life-stories of a number of Germans whose paths now cross Juan's. There is first of all the great Jewish gynaecologist Schneider and his wife who have been forced by the Nazi racial legislation into menial occupations. Then we retrace the early lives of several lower-class Berliners who are employed in a fashionable club. We read of the adventures of two Prussian aristocrats, members of the club, who visit it during their stays in the city. Their stories take us to the front at Leningrad and to the country estates of the characters. Juan, the stateless Spaniard, marries one of the club servants, Hermine. Dr. Schneider finally vanishes into a concentration camp after having saved Hermine's life in childbirth. The two Prussian nobles are killed in their East German estates by Russian and German partisans. Juan succeeds in getting back to Spain with his wife.

Only the opening scenes of the novel take place in Spain: but Juan, the 'stateless exile', is always longing to return home. In

<sup>1</sup> *Viento del Norte* (North Wind) (Ediciones Destino, Barcelona, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> *Sin Patria* (Stateless) (Editorial Plenitud, Madrid, 1950). *Hospital General* (Ediciones Destino, Barcelona, 1948).

Berlin the expatriated Spaniards keep together and live in the same district. In the last pages of the novel, before deciding to return to Spain, Juan goes to visit one of his comrades, another Spanish Socialist who has just been arrested by the Berlin Gestapo. This friend, nicknamed *el Madrileño*, is to be handed over by the Nazi police to the Spanish authorities. 'Aren't you afraid?' asks Juan. 'Why do you say that?' replies *el Madrileño*. 'Even if the worst happens, at least it will happen in Spain, in our own country.' Juan thinks: 'El Madrileño is right. He is braver than all the others. No one can reproach him with anything. He has fought fanatically, with conviction. What does it matter what may happen to him? At least he will have the joy of seeing the lamps of the Plaza de Cibeles<sup>1</sup> lighting up in the evening and then, going down the Paseo del Prado he will see the trees overhanging the stone benches, pale in the dusk.' And Juan too decides to return.

This succession of snapshots, intermingled biographies, uncompleted destinies is perhaps not very true to Spanish literary tradition, but Manuel Pombo Angulo has undoubtedly the gifts of a very great novelist and he has made his mark. His admirers hope that he will now apply his talent to a purely Spanish theme.

One is somewhat astonished to find in this florescence of novels only the slightest echo of Catholic life in Spain. Pedrito de Andia is a pious child who mortifies himself so that Our Lady may work a miracle for him: but, as his confessor, Father Cornejo, tells him, credulity is the greatest obstacle to faith. But apart from this Father Cornejo and Sister Josefa of *Viento del Norte*, a pleasant but very secondary character, we seek in vain a single personage whose life is really transformed and illuminated by the Faith.

Obviously there is nothing surprising that religious convictions do not preserve Spaniards any more than the rest of men from temptations to murder or adultery. Neither Camillo José Cela nor Dario Fernandez Florez scandalizes us with their 'picaresque' novels. Nor does José Suarez Carreno, the author of *Las Ultimas Horas* (Nadal Prize, 1949; published by *Ediciones Destino*, Barcelona), a clever story, quite amoral, which features some magnificently spontaneous Madrid street urchins and rich profligates, both classes utterly devoid of morality or religious sentiment. Catholic nations are not puritanical and they do not require their

<sup>1</sup> One of the principal squares in Madrid, the native city of *el Madrileño*, as the name indicates.

authors to write novels of 'high moral tone' in the Anglo-Saxon manner . . . of former days!

But how can we understand how the most remarkable characters—Álvaro of *Viento del Norte*, for example, who is presented to us as a practising Catholic—seem never to be inspired by their faith in the conduct of their lives? Though Elena Quiroga's story describes a number of Catholic practices and introduces a priest (who is, incidentally, quite vapid) the novel is steeped in an atmosphere of semi-panteism—the only gods which are worshipped in the Galician *pazo* of La Sagreira are Life and Nature. Likewise, though Dario Fernandez Florez writes as an epilogue to the story of Lola, the prostitute, a kind of commentary on the prophet Hosea and the First Epistle to the Corinthians 'now we see as in a glass, darkly', the heroine is such a 'dark glass' (*espejo oscuro*) that one does not see at any time a particle of grace in her.

Is this timidity of the Spanish novelists to tackle Catholic themes due, as is sometimes suggested, to the fear of a censorship which is susceptible in the matter of orthodoxy? Or would it not rather be the heritage of the Liberal period, when it was considered 'not good form' among bourgeois intellectuals to discuss religious topics in public? One must remember that the masters of the generation which is now coming to fame had almost all drifted away from Catholic beliefs: the new generation will doubtless require some time to free itself from these anti-Catholic prejudices before daring to present to the public their own experiences of sin and grace.

However, if religious themes are never treated deeply for themselves in contemporary Spanish novels, there is, I think, a more serious reason. Faith, when it enters into a dramatic action as an essential element, must appear necessarily as a problem posed to man's liberty. One need only think of Camus, Mauriac, Gertrud von le Fort, Ernst Jünger, Thomas Mann, Elizabeth Langgässer, Hermann Hesse. German writers especially expatiate on this theme of faith, which offers the richest of possibilities to their taste for metaphysical intricacies. This does not mean that for Spaniards faith is expressed by a corpus of practices and traditions which do not preoccupy their consciences. Nothing could be less true. But for Spaniards faith is not a 'problem'. Or rather, if it is so for an isolated author, it is certainly not for the readers. When Unamuno attempted to deal with the theme of faith in *San Manuel Bueno, Martir*, for example, it read like a dissertation. We said earlier that

foreign readers must abandon the idea of seeking in the novels of the past few years even a sketch of the problems which preoccupy Spain today. No more will he find in the Spanish novelists we have mentioned an echo of the religious faith of the people. The Spanish preference for their conception of 'realism' is as unpropitious to the 'sociological' novel as to the 'metaphysical'; both seem to Spanish readers to belong to the same type of literature—that which is condemned as 'novels with a message'.

A variety of causes whose relative influences are difficult to determine (political prudence, traditional literary temperament, the influence of Ortega y Gasset)<sup>1</sup> orients the younger writers towards compositions in which their poetic gifts can be freely exercised. This results in works which are often very fine, with classical construction and language and very pure artistry—perhaps a little too pure and ethereal. According to Spanish critics themselves no work has appeared in the last decade which reveals the temperament of a really creative novelist. But if they do not bring us any technical novelty in the creative order, they offer us a joy which has become too rare. In a Europe gripped by anxiety and quivering with problems (in which literature often echoes the morbidities of psychology) Spain offers us the spectacle of a balanced humanity, weak and sinful, admittedly, but lucid and more or less in control of itself. One may have a different conception of the novel from that which is current in Spanish literary circles; one may prefer a kind of literature which is more sociologically and politically 'aware', which is really a 'weapon in the cause of the human spirit', or which is engaged in tearing the mask from the various modern hypocrisies. But all this detracts nothing from the pleasure which we will always experience on encountering a work of art. Amid contemporary European production, these novels which we have presented are an oasis where it is delightful to enter.

<sup>1</sup> 'Any real novel with political, ideological, symbolical or satirical intentions is still-born. The real novelist is he who possesses the gift of forgetting—and causing others to forget—any reality existing outside his novel. How can I interest myself in the destiny of the characters if the author forces me at the same time to consider the problem of my own political or metaphysical destiny?' Ortega y Gasset, *Ideas sobre la Novela*, p. 411

## BOOK REVIEWS

### HISTORY UNDER GLASS

*From Domesday Book to Magna Carta.* By A. L. Poole. (Oxford University Press. 25s.)

TODAY'S historian is a very busy creature: his business, we are told, is to ask questions. This new situation, though it draws him into alignment with scholars in neighbouring—and indeed in distant—fields, at once distinguishes him from his own predecessors. For his predecessors were content to make statements. They were self-confident men, but self-confidence is no longer a virtue. To be sure of oneself in the twentieth century—to be *sure* of anything—is an ostentation, even though certainty may compel humility. With the loss of self-confidence, and in the reluctance to desire it, self-consciousness has become the mood, and doubt and shyness the habit of scholarship. Questions beget questions. We do not know what we dare not ask, and we only ask what we dare.

The historian nowadays dares very little. And the completeness with which he has taken refuge behind his questions is reflected in the history he writes. It is caution that has given history a new look, yet its utterance has a new and terrible audacity as well. For under the current interrogatory method, what was once a seamless robe has been innocently parted, and its guardians have cast lots for the pieces. Each piece has been remade into a separate garment fitting the figures of lesser men, who have recourse to fancy names to give themselves stature. Here is economic history, there political, there again social, diplomatic, constitutional, administrative, ecclesiastical, each with its own attendants, its own livery, its own peculiar questions. No longer a master-builder, the historian has become scarcely more than an articulated craftsman (with special trade journals to contain each article of his craft). He has held countless inquisitions and post-mortems. He has been indefatigable. But the question he has rarely found need or time to ask himself during the past half-century is: what has become of history?

What has become of English history? At hand there is the where-withal to provide an answer. For there has been coming out of Oxford

during the past fifteen years a composite History of England under the editorship of Professor G. N. Clark. The work is not yet complete, but nine of the fourteen scheduled volumes have now appeared in print, the most recent being Dr. Poole's. His allocation covers the century and a quarter from the accession of 'short, thickset, corpulent' William Rufus to the death of 'tough, rather stout, energetic' King John, a crucial period in English history which witnessed, in Dr. Poole's words, 'the growth of a nation'.

The phrase, encountered on the first page of this book, stirs the imagination much as, some months ago, it was stirred by the conception of the Festival of Britain. As that was going to 'add up to one united act of national reassessment' (according to its catalogue) so, according to his prolegomena, would Dr. Poole's book. But, like the Festival, the book disappoints; and in much the same way. Reading it recalls nothing so much as that long-awaited visit to the South Bank, where there was everything to see but only exhaustion to remember. And Dr. Poole's book lacks even the cohesive architectural pattern which, on the South Bank, made a recognizable impression. Here we are provided with a diverse collection of historical exhibits, tidily arranged in fourteen separate show-cases (or pavilions), carefully labelled, sometimes imaginatively displayed; but all refusing to make a coherent impression, and tiresomely remote from touch—history under glass.

There is, in the advertised order, a case containing 'Government and Society', one showing 'Rural Conditions', another 'Towns and Trade'. There is 'The Conquest of Normandy', followed at a proper interval by its 'Loss'. Intervening, in another order, are 'The Anarchy' and 'The Angevin Empire'; 'Church and State', Part I (Anselm) and Part II (Becket); 'Learning, Literature, and Art'; 'The Celtic Fringe'. And 'Justice and Finance' lead finally into a tidier dual sequence on King John, 'The Interdict' and 'The Charter'. This catalogue at once invites these seemingly impertinent questions: Was there then no learning in the Church, no justice in the Government, no finance in trade? Had the Celtic fringe no 'rural condition', no literature and no Church? If their asking invites contempt, it does at least engender movement. Are they then so impertinent?

We have noted that Dr. Poole invites us in this book to witness the growth of a nation. He has brought before us a wealth of information, diversified, well-authenticated, unequivocal. But out of this rich soil nothing visibly *grows*. The segmentation of the story, which follows suspiciously the pattern of preceding volumes in the Oxford History, destroys any illusion of movement—of total movement. These are lantern-slides still, when the cinematograph is at hand.

Growth might be defined as the measurement of change between fixed points—if a direction is assumed. Fixed points in history are not easy to find, and are still more difficult to defend. But with a spark of

imagination and a shot of confidence they are there, not so much in time perhaps as in memorial. Dr. Poole has indicated two such points on his own title page—the tragedy is that he has left them there. For *Domesday Book* and *Magna Carta*, which were both the products of gigantic social and political activity, issued in words which give them that quality of fixity we seek. In these two documents, mediaeval England twice took stock of itself, and so moved on. In aim and in content they have little in common, but they represent in one case the achievement of order, and in the other the achievement of law. With these achieved, something like a nation is in being.

In 1086 a conquering king still needed to make his conquest fruitful. To do this he initiated one of the most extensive inquiries ever undertaken by any government in any period of history. It was an enquiry remarkable both for its thoroughness and for the speed with which it was carried out. It determined the ownership of land, the terms of its tenure, and the status of its tenants. Barely two decades after its compilation, *Domesday Book* was being used as legal evidence to settle a dispute, and two hundred years later the *Domesday* description *terra Regis* determined what land was, and what was not, ancient demesne. Here, if anywhere, is one of history's fixed points.

One hundred and thirty years later, the politically powerful aristocracy of England needed to make their power determinate. If the question settled by the *Domesday Book* was: who holds land and under what conditions? the question settled by the Great Charter was: who holds power and under what conditions? There might be dispute thereafter, both as to rights of property and power, but then there existed some means of determination higher than force. It was still a political partisan who, within fifty years of its issue, summed up the Charter:

Dicitur vulgariter 'ut rex vult, lex vadit';  
Veritas vult aliter, nam lex stat, rex cadit,

but the sophistication of the utterance was the mark of another fixed, and turning, point in English history.

Between *Domesday Book* and *Magna Carta*, then, England moved through order to law—that surely is the sum, in brief, of the intervening years, and the meaning of Dr. Poole's happy phrase 'the growth of a nation'. Of itself it gives no adequate account of the history of these years—it is crude stuff. But it is the crude steel girder that holds together the building, disappearing from view behind the tiers of bricks and stone. And it is just one such consolidating idea that we miss after the first page of Dr. Poole's book. There is much well-strawed brick, much neat hewn stone, but the building is unstable.

In fairness to Dr. Poole it should be added that, though his sketch of English society in these crucial years defies a frame, he has provided a very good account of the complex association of Norman and Angevin England with the Norman and Angevin continental kingdoms. We do

not always remember Henry II as 'an international figure on the European stage; a ruler of a large and composite state stretching from Scotland to the Pyrenees, a dominion comparable in extent, and indeed in the looseness of the bonds which united the component parts, only to the Holy Roman Empire'. Nor do we often think of Becket as Chancellor for eight years of this same dominion. But he was so, and the thought better adjusts England's position on the political map of twelfth-century Europe. And something of the same perspective emerges, though in scattered flashes, from the history of the English Church as recorded here. It provided at this period the only English Pope as yet, Adrian IV, whose election was a measure of the extent of English influence at Rome; and another Englishman, Gilbert of Hastings, became bishop of Lisbon and introduced into Portugal the Sarum missal, which remained in use there until the sixteenth century.

When he is looking out from England at the larger mediaeval scene Dr. Poole is at his best; when he is looking in on England—from Rome, for example—he is less happy in his description, less understanding, and less fair; and when he is looking around within England itself he is at times almost incoherent. It would seem that he is overpowered by the material now at his disposal for such a study. English historians, working upon a mass of new documentary material, have broken up English history into so many small parcels and special studies that to learn anything one is obliged to learn too much. These painstaking researches have brought many correctives to the detail of the story but in effect they have submerged the story itself.

This disappearance of narrative from history is symptomatic of the present condition of historical studies, and it is scarcely a matter of wide regret among historians themselves, many of whom have deliberately contrived it. There is no doubt that the modern technical account they offer has definite advantages over the literary exposition of the past which it is replacing, and, if we may indulge in a little amateur semantics, we can derive some proper mandate for the interrogatory method from the Greek *ιστορία*, 'a learning by inquiry'. But also conveyed by the Greek, and more strongly iterated in the Latin *historia*, is the meaning, 'a narrative'. The divorce of either pursuit from the other, therefore, renders the product something less than history. To achieve a happy harmony between his twin objectives, the historian must be involved in twin disciplines: that of action to order his inquiry, and that of contemplation to inspire his narrative. If yesterday the discipline of action had not yet been perfected, today it is the discipline of contemplation which has been neglected—except by accident, by the brutal accident of war, for example. One thinks of Henri Pirenne, interned in Germany in 1916 and 1917, preparing his great *Histoire de l'Europe*, a book which, in his son's words, was 'the synthesis of all his knowledge, ripened in meditation at a time when, being deprived of access to books, he could confront that knowledge only with his own

thought'. But must the writing of history await temporal catastrophe for its contemplative preparation? Dr. Poole has spent the leisure hours of twenty years preparing his book, yet in achievement it does not touch the work of Pirenne. One suspects that his leisure habits are those of continual action, and the conclusion is obvious. Unless and until the historian matches his breadth of action with a corresponding depth of contemplation, and is thus enabled both to master what he has discovered and to discard what he has over-learned, he will be compelled to provide for the reader no more than what is now provided—not so much the Oxford History as the Oxford Companion to History.

MICHAEL STEPHENS

### THE STONOR FAMILY

*Stonor.* By Robert Julian Stonor, O.S.B., M.A. (R. H. Johns. 21s.)

IN this most attractive volume Dom Julian Stonor has described the history of his own family and their long tenure of the estate of Stonor. The story is unfolded at a leisurely pace and the writing is marked by a delightful freshness and sincerity. The coloured frontispiece gives an unforgettable impression of the great house and is reproduced on the effective dust cover. The book is well illustrated and among the photographs there is a striking view of the exterior of Stonor Chapel taken by John Piper. It is this chapel, one of the three in England where the Mass was never discontinued, which gives its meaning to the history of the Stonor family.

The first chapters are interesting and there is also an excellent account of the Stonors during the fifteenth century, but it is the post-Reformation period which is central to the book. As Dom Julian makes clear, the history of the earlier generations has been known in some detail through the publication of *Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483*, which was edited for the Camden Society by C. L. Kingsford. It is in his study of the Stonors between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries that the author breaks fresh ground.

The book contains accounts of Sir Adrian Fortescue, who lived at Stonor, and of Dom Sebastian Newdigate, the Carthusian martyr, who was uncle to Cecily Lady Stonor. Reference is made to Adrian Fortescue's account books which reveal the pleasant detail that he won £7 'at play'. If material exists at Stonor, Fortescue would prove a good subject for a biographical study. He is one of the most appealing among the martyred laymen.

Dom Julian gives a detailed description of the printing of Edmund Campion's *Decem Rationes* at the secret press at Stonor. The account of Margaret Countess of Salisbury and that of Campion's martyrdom may appear discursive, but they fall into place, for these were the stories handed down generation by generation among the old Catholics. The figure of Cecily Lady Stonor, who survived until after 1592, is crucial to

the history of Stonor, for it would seem to have been her influence that ranged her family finally among the Catholic Recusants. In dealing with the seventeenth century the effect of the recusancy fines upon a large landed property is set out clearly.

In a later section of the book there is an admirable account of Bishop John Talbot Stonor, who was Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District from 1716 until 1756. The part played by the Whig Duke of Shrewsbury in safeguarding the interests of his Catholic relatives is well brought out. Letter books belonging to Bishop Stonor would throw valuable light on a singularly ill-documented period in English Catholic history. However, the claim made for this prelate that his consecration of Bishop Hornyold in Stonor Chapel was the first to take place in England under the penal laws can hardly be sustained. Even if the three episcopal consecrations in London in 1688 are disregarded, since the penal laws were in effect abrogated, Bishop Challoner had been consecrated at Hammersmith some fifteen years earlier. In this portion of the volume there is an interesting description of Catholic education on the Continent with details of Mgr. Christopher Stonor and of the other priests and nuns of the family.

The author makes the point that in modern times it was only during the eighteenth century that the Catholic squirearchy began to produce priests in any numbers. It may be noted that the beginning of this tendency coincided with the first generation who found all military service closed to them except in the armies of France, the Empire or Bavaria.

It would have been interesting to have had details of the Stonor rent roll throughout the period of the penal laws. Like their neighbours the Blounts of Mapledurham, the greater part of their building seems to have taken place during the full rigour of the exactions. In common with the other leading Catholic families they appear to have grown rich in the eighteenth century, benefiting by those Catholic heiresses who were kept within that one closed grouping. Thus the third Lord Camoys and his younger brother divided between them the ancestral Stonor lands, a share in the Biddulph estates in Staffordshire, Holmwood in Oxfordshire, and Lostock and Anderton in Lancashire, the latter representing a moiety of the Ince Blundell properties. This recalls the landed wealth that was acquired by the Throckmortons and Welds in their heyday in the late eighteenth century.

The chapters dealing with more recent times are perhaps naturally more sketchy. There is a pleasing description of General Henry von Stonor and a good brief account of Archbishop Stonor, but none of the later heads of the family stand out as distinct individuals. This seems, however, in keeping with the general purpose of the book to depict the Stonors under persecution. As a small point it would have been of interest to have been told what part the third Lord Camoys took on the introduction of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. Towards the end of the volume Dom Julian gives us a good account of Stonor Park.

One is left with the impression of a family deeply loyal to the Crown and with a long attachment to their religion; the men anchored to Stonor, the wives often very strongly Catholic; a family of many priests and still more numerous nuns. The whole of this long study is imbued with a deeply religious spirit. This is a book which should be approached in a spirit of reflection, for it throws much light on the old Catholic body. The more the book is pondered the more will the reader be attracted by its sympathy and integrity. DAVID MATHEW

#### SIMONE WEIL'S SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*Waiting on God.* By Simone Weil. Translated by Emma Craufurd. (Routledge & Kegan Paul. 12s. 6d.)

To judge, even to understand, this book as it should be judged and understood, it is important to distinguish between two forms of intellectual activity, the profound but obscure intuitions of the spirit and the clear intuition and discrimination we call discursive thought. For, in the former, Simone Weil was outstandingly gifted, in the latter she failed. And she is herself at least half conscious of this. For in her spiritual autobiography she speaks of 'the mediocrity of her natural faculties' which depressed her at adolescence. She was consoled by the conviction 'that no matter what human being, even though practically devoid of natural faculties, can penetrate to the kingdom of truth reserved for genius if only he longs for truth and concentrates all his attention upon its attainment. He thus becomes a genius too, even though, for lack of talent, his genius cannot be visible from the outside.' She perceives that genius is not the high degree of intellectual endowment usually understood by the term, but a particular kind of intellectual operation, penetrating insight into the obscure depths of truth. And this gift is indeed hers. Her book is rich in insight born of a vital contact with God and the fundamental realities of spirit. But she lacks the complementary gift of stating these insights in terms of clear thought, not of course exhaustively, for that is impossible, but by integrating them in a consistent fabric of thought, harmonized with other aspects of truth.

In consequence, her thought is confused and inconsistent, her deepest spiritual insights too often mis-stated. Indeed she condemns her own weakness when she says that all faulty connection of ideas 'is due to the fact that thought has seized upon some idea too hastily'. For, instead of scrutinizing a spiritual insight carefully and discriminating its content, she is too often content to accept it and set it down in its first formulation, confusing the latter with the insight itself. For example: 'Contact with God is the true sacrament.' What, no doubt, is meant is that union with God is the sum and substance of religious observance, for whose sake sacraments exist. But the statement is absurd. For a sacrament is essentially an external and sensible sign of an interior grace, and union with God is the latter alone.

The insight that the positive activity of creatures, even when sinfully abused, is a communication of the Divine Act, and that without God's permission no sin could be committed, is mis-stated as though somehow sin is actually willed by God, and once committed, though not at the time of commission, must be accepted as His will.

Many different reasons are given why the writer could not accept baptism. Some of these are serious difficulties, for example the official sanction given to the Inquisition. But others can hardly be taken seriously, that she is not holy enough to receive a sacrament, that to enter the Church would cut her off from the unbelievers among whom her vocation lay. But we must on no account suspect bad faith. She knew that she was not ready for baptism, that God had not given her the clear call to receive it. For whatever she may say at times about accepting Catholic doctrines, in fact she did not believe the Church to be the infallible teacher of truth and ark of salvation. What she did believe was that the Church possesses a unique treasure of truth, and that is by no means the same thing. This is not to say that her criticisms of Catholics' refusal or reluctance to recognize the measure of truth and goodness in other religions, often even in secular activities and achievements, are without substance.

Moreover, at this crucial point her incapacity for clear and consistent thought is painfully evident: 'I love the Catholic faith' but 'I felt that after having said to myself, "perhaps all that is not true", I ought, without ceasing, to say it—I still take care to say it very often now—to join it to the opposite formula, "perhaps all that is true and to make them alternate". My thought should be indifferent to all ideas without exception, including, for instance, materialism and atheism: it must be equally welcoming and equally reserved with regard to every one of them.' It is frankly amazing that anyone so convinced, and by personal experience, of God's reality and presence, of the saving power of Christ and His Cross, could write these words. The spirit is mightily certain, but the mind, the discursive reason, muddled in the extreme.

The knowledge, so common among mystics, that selfhood must perish is mis-stated as though personal identity must cease. This at least is suggested when she writes, 'My greatest desire is to lose . . . all personal being.' Sometimes Simone Weil seems blind to the obvious. In the Lord's Prayer, for example, 'hallowed be thy name' is not, as she would have it, a petition for what in any case is the fact that God's name should be holy but, what is very far from being wholly true, that men should adore its holiness, manifest and respect in their conduct. Nor, when we pray 'thy will be done', are we affirming and accepting the fact that it always is and must be done. We are asking that men's will and behaviour should perfectly conform to the will of God. Here also we meet again the misconception, on which I commented earlier, that God positively wills the sinful acts He permits. In one passage students are

told to work 'without any reference to their natural abilities and tastes' because it will form the habit of attention which is the substance of prayer. Two pages later, however, they are told that 'The intelligence can only be led by desire. For there to be desire there must be pleasure and joy in the work . . . The joy of learning is as indispensable in study as breathing is in running.' Desire, surely, and joy, are not likely to be felt in work which runs counter to natural abilities and tastes. A few, no doubt, may be sufficiently holy to find joy even in distasteful and unsuitable work done conscientiously for the love of God. But the wise teacher will not expect it.

The concluding essay on 'The Three Sons of Noah and the History of Mediterranean Civilization' might with advantage have been omitted. It is fantastic and unfounded speculation, which should be impossible in the present state of our historical knowledge. Greek religion, for example, derived not from Egypt, as Herodotus supposed, but from two sources, the pre-Achaean Aegean religion centred upon the cult of a Mother Goddess and the Achaean religion centred upon the Aryan sky-god. And it is ludicrous to suggest that Joshua's victories in Palestine were due to the fact that the manpower of the native inhabitants had been diverted to the Trojan war.

We must also protest against an ultra-felonian exaggeration of pure love. 'I should joyfully obey God's order to go to the very centre of hell and to remain there eternally.' 'If, by an absurd hypothesis, I were to die without ever having committed any serious faults and yet . . . were to fall to the bottom of hell, I should nevertheless owe God an infinite debt of gratitude for His infinite mercy, on account of my earthly life.' What good purpose is served by these preposterous *tours de force*?

Do you conclude, the reader may well ask of the reviewer, the book is not worth reading? For a coherent philosophy or theology it certainly is not. These are completely lacking. But for those with sufficient knowledge and discernment to distinguish a spiritual insight from its conceptual statement the book is rich in particular penetrations of Divine reality. And where Mlle Weil is content to state her experience descriptively even the statement of it is acceptable. Here are a few examples:

At times the very first words of the *Pater Noster* tear my thought from my body and transport it to a place outside space where there is neither perspective nor point of view. The infinity of the ordinary expanse of perception is replaced by an infinity to the second or sometimes the third degree. At the same time, filling every part of this infinity of infinity, there is silence, a silence which is not an absence of sound but which is the object of a positive sensation more positive than that of sound.

I do not need any hope or promise to believe that God is rich in mercy. I know this wealth of His with the certainty of experience. I have touched it

There is a fine passage on the seed of deification implanted in the soul by God. There is also an illuminating study of affliction, '*malheur*', hopelessly degrading to the sufferer apart from the action of God and Christ but transformed by Divine aid into a unique union with God. This is expressed by the pregnant thought that the crucifying nail nails the soul to the very substance of reality. Much is said profoundly and well of the love of God implicit in the love of our neighbour and in the love of natural beauty, though, and here I presumably part company with Mlle Weil, this is possible, in my opinion, only if a soul does not explicitly reject God with satisfaction in the belief that He does not exist. 'Christianity is catholic by right', better expressed implicitly, 'but not in fact' because the implications are not fully realized. Even when the statement is unacceptable, we must often ask what is behind it, what is the writer seeking to express. And we shall find that she is mis-stating an intuition of spiritual truth which a little reflexion can release from its unsatisfactory conceptualization and make nourishing bread of the spirit.

In short: Simone Weil was a mystic and a mystic of rare quality. But she was a muddle-minded mystic. Justifiable dissatisfaction with the thinker should not blind us to her stature as a contemplative, nor admiration of her gifts and graces of contemplation to the grave deficiencies and inconsistencies of her thought.

E. I. WATKIN

### CRISIS IN ENGLISH POETRY

*Crisis in English Poetry 1880-1940.* By V. de S. Pinto. (Hutchinson. 7s. 6d.)

HAS there in fact been a crisis in English poetry since 1880, and if so in what does it consist? It is at once evident that the last seventy years have witnessed a loosening of form, a widening of subject-matter and a syncopation of rhythm unprecedented in the history of English verse. Moreover, psychology and anthropology have opened up a vast new hinterland which has only just begun to be colonized. If there has been a single turning-point in such a complex period, the difficulty will be to pin-point it and to analyse it exactly, and the danger will lie in mistaking the conditions of the crisis for the crisis itself.

When we turn to Professor Pinto's book we find that he uses the word 'crisis' without qualification in as many as five different senses, which, since the author continually confuses them throughout the book, may be tabulated as follows: (i) The crisis arising from the shift of political power from the traditional ruling class to the masses. This has affected poetry by depriving the poet of his customary audience, and by changing his way of life—his servants, if ever they had done so in the past, could now no longer do his living for him. (ii) The devitalized city-culture, with its attendant evils of unemployment and social injus-

tice. (iii) The crisis of ugliness: 'in [the] landscape of the industrialized England of the 'eighties there is no place where a poet could be happy'. (iv) The world wars, which degraded and disillusioned both the poet and his audience. (v) The lack of spiritual values concomitant with the above developments. This was manifest in an increasing hostility to everything for which the poet stands.

The fact that the word 'crisis' is used indiscriminately in these five different senses results in considerable confusion, and makes it difficult to disengage the thesis of the book. This, however, may be summarized as follows.

Professor Pinto believes that poetry should be a criticism of life, and his criterion of good poetry is that it should face up to the crisis in at least one of the five senses given above. Furthermore, good poetry must express what he calls 'the schism in the soul'. He quotes Arnold Toynbee to the effect that standardization and uniformity are the marks of the period of the schism in the soul, which heralds the decay of civilization. This schism is later defined as resulting from 'the contrast between the development of the moral sense and the dehumanized world-picture provided by the discoveries of the scientists'. By this Professor Pinto evidently means the lack of religious faith in England today. Good poetry, then, should express this lack of faith and at the same time meet the demands of the modern crisis.

The application of this criterion in particular instances yields startling conclusions. Thus, Hopkins is praised for his recognition of the injustice and ugliness of late Victorian England in his letter to Bridges containing the remark: 'Horrible to say, in a manner, I am a Communist.' Hopkins has had the courage to meet the crisis in senses (ii) and (iii). Yeats, we are told, succeeded 'in overcoming the modern crisis' (sense v) by means of an integration of his own personality, but he achieved that integration at the expense of 'losing grasp of the always more complex world'. His occult mythology could never be a vital faith for the masses, so Professor Pinto's final verdict is that Yeats was no more than 'a heroic failure'. Stronger criticism is reserved for the Edwardians and Georgians. They deliberately turned away from the contemporary situation and used the day-dream of an unspoiled English countryside as an anodyne ('crisis' in senses i and iii). Their poetry must therefore be rejected as somehow 'unreal and dead'. However, Edward Thomas and Edmund Blunden 'have integrity', because 'for both, the English countryside was a living reality and not merely a pleasant view from the window of a week-end cottage'. This reprieve for two typical Georgian poets is very curious. When we combine it with the fact that Professor Pinto praises Hopkins' terrible last sonnets, although they are intensely personal works and take no account of any external crisis, we realize that Professor Pinto has a suppressed second criterion of good poetry over and above the one he has officially announced. In fact, he has set out with the intention of forcing poetry

into the mould of an ambiguous theory, but when this policy would result in the disparagement of his favourite authors, happily the theory is jettisoned and Professor Pinto yields to his innate good literary taste: he cannot bring himself to condemn good poetry simply because it fails to express or to heal 'the schism in the soul'. This confusion of criterions lies behind almost every literary opinion in the book.

A more insidious form of this same *esprit de thèse* is shown at the end of an otherwise excellent chapter on Eliot. We are told that in the *Four Quartets* Eliot has overcome 'the schism in the soul' and found a solution to the modern crisis (sense v), but it is to be regretted that it is a highly personal solution like that of Yeats in his later poems. We may well ask Professor Pinto, since he is not satisfied with a renewal of religious faith, what he does require poetry to provide. Does he imagine that the poet or any other man has the power to construct a myth popular and vital enough to sweep the masses off their feet into a redemptive humanism? Evidently he does, for at one point in his book he says that poetry must attempt 'to overcome the crisis and create a new spiritual integration'. In *What is Literature?* Sartre demanded that all prose works should be revolutionary, but even he exempted poetry from such a rôle; while the second part of Professor Pinto's plan can be achieved, not by any human means, but only by grace working within the individual soul.

The root of most of the confusion in this book lies in the fact that none of the crises Professor Pinto has in mind exerted more than a negligible effect on poetry. The course of poetry is changed by poets and by poets only, and a turning-point in poetry is effected by one or more great poets. The significant factors in English poetry during the years 1880-1940 were that Hopkins revitalized its language, Yeats showed how effectively symbols could be used and Eliot extended the field of poetry to include the whole of life. It is true, of course, that the political, social and other developments mentioned by Professor Pinto played their part in influencing these poets. But this is not what the author claims for them: he holds that they constituted the crisis itself.

It would be nearer the truth to say that the ultimate crisis of the period was that which took place within the soul of its great poets, the momentous decisions which changed the course of their art, some revealed to the world, some hidden still. If we are looking for the crisis of modern English poetry we will find it in Hopkins' decision to enter the Society of Jesus and, later, his decision to study the works of Scotus; in such events as Yeats' first attendance at a séance and his decision as an ageing man to undergo the Steinach glandular operation; in Eliot's decision to live in Europe and his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism. A work dealing with these crises would have been difficult to write, but it would have proved a much more important book than the one Professor Pinto has chosen to give us.

VINCENT CRONIN

## 'THE MONARCH OF WIT'

*The Monarch of Wit: An Analytical and Comparative Study of the Poetry of John Donne.* By J. B. Leishman. (Hutchinson's University Library, 16s.)

It is no accident that the vogue for the poetry of John Donne should belong particularly to the last thirty years. Much of it speaks directly to a world which has been disintegrated by the impact of two disastrous wars as Donne's world had been shattered by the effects of the Reformation. The colloquial candour, the apparent cynicism, the intellectual gymnastics have a prominent place in the poetry of our own time. But while we read the brilliant, mocking songs or satires we must remind ourselves of the sermons and the Holy Sonnets: the 'Monarch of Wit' was also Dean of St. Paul's. The transition from profane to sacred may be explained either by the hypothesis of a conversion so decisive that it brought about a basic change of character or, and this is Mr. Leishman's conviction, by the thesis that a great many of his poems which appear to describe his own feelings and experiences are in fact no more than exercises of 'wit' in which he delighted to let loose his intellect and his imagination.

Mr. Leishman sets out to demonstrate:

(1) That Donne is not a 'metaphysical poet' in the wider sense of being a philosophic one.

(2) That the sense in which he is commonly called metaphysical might more properly be described as scholastic or dialectical.

(3) That in almost all Donne's best poetry there is an element of personal drama which is no less characteristic than the dialectical strain.

(4) That there is in many of his poems a very strong element of 'sheer wit and paradox'.

He makes the case for these contentions thoroughly and convincingly.

'Metaphysical' is one of those unfortunate umbrella words which, as he points out, tend to 'spread over everything a veil of custom and a film of familiarity which shall save us as much as possible from the insupportable fatigue of thought', and he justly analyses in Donne's verse a preponderating element which is dialectical and dramatic rather than philosophical.

He points out that the poems in which the 'sheer wit' is most evident were influenced by the technique of public disputation which was still an important part of University education. Just as the debater had been prepared to defend almost any proposition, so Donne brings to bear upon the strangest arguments all the forces of his brilliant and penetrating intellect. He liked to set problems for his mind to solve; the less real, the less actual they were, the more readily was he able to ex-

press his answers in verse. 'A concupiscence of wit', to use his own phrase, took charge of him and lent him eloquence. He said himself: 'I did best when I had least truth for my subjects', and it is perhaps not fanciful to hear behind these revealing words an undertone of uncertainty and perhaps of despair.

In this judgement he hardly did justice to his secular poetry which includes, after all, apart from the witty extravaganzas, some beautiful and moving poems in which his own feelings were almost certainly deeply engaged, for example 'The Anniversarie' and 'A Valediction: forbidding mourning'.

In defending his thesis that Donne's poetry is characterized by a strong element of personal drama, Mr. Leishman quotes at length from the poems and makes a number of fruitful comparisons between the work of Donne and his contemporaries. He links the profane and the sacred poems in an analysis in which he refers to 'the intensely personal drama of his relationship with a woman, or the intensely personal drama of his relationship with God'. It is the personal and isolated nature of this drama that gives to the best of the Holy Sonnets their terrible force.

But even in his religious poetry the element of 'wit' is not absent. One cannot doubt the depth of feeling which wrung out of him the sonnet which begins: 'Batter my heart, three person'd God.' But in others Mr. Leishman sensitively observes a more detached attitude.

He seems, as it were, to be trying to stimulate his faith by means of his intellect, trying to make himself *feel* the reality of these mysteries and paradoxes by displaying them to himself under as many aspects as he can.

This lack of assurance seems to underlie even his most arrogant, most outrageous verse. Behind it we can detect a note of doubt, of loss, and without questioning the sincerity of the motives which led him from the Catholic to the Anglican Communion we may well ask with Mr. Leishman:

May it not even sometimes have occurred to him, who had so sharp an eye for distinctions and subtleties, that there was a point of view from which his renunciation of the old religion might be regarded, not as a conversion, but as an apostasy?

I suspect that Donne was more deeply affected than he could ever realize by his own rejection of an absolute unitive authority which he could neither wholly forget nor wholly replace. This rejection left a breach in his defences, in the armour of his self-confidence, through which the gaunt images of death and corruption poured to occupy his mind and his writing. This is conjecture. We cannot know, for 'the dust of great persons graves is speechless too'.

Mr. Leishman is at pains to point out that the adjective 'metaphysical' is an inaccurate label and that 'scholastic' or 'dialectical' would more adequately define the nature of his poetry. In his treatment of this subject he is much concerned with the precise meanings of words and it is perhaps surprising, therefore, to find that in other contexts he uses them without adequate definition. In the first chapter of his book he gives as his opinion that 'both Jonson and Donne wrote poems more sequacious, organic and untransposable than their predecessors.' To this I could only make the mental comment 'Indeed'. In a later digression he says: 'I do not say that we should read and admire only what is classical, but I think it is most important that we should not lose the ability to distinguish between what is classical and what is not, for, if we do, we shall tend to become provincial and eccentric in our admirations'. No definition is offered for the word 'classical', and in a later passage he begs a similar question when he states that: 'the "Ode to the West Wind" is a much better, a much more poetical, poem than either "The Autumnall" or the Epistle to the Countess of Huntingdon'. But these are small objections to a most painstaking and comprehensive book which, and for this the reader may well be grateful, makes no attempt at cosmic judgements about life, literature and death, but concentrates on a detailed study of texts and throws much light on the work of a remarkable English poet.

DAVID LLOYD JAMES

#### FRENCH REVIEWS

THE August-September number of *La Vie Spirituelle* devoted its first two articles to facets of a theme which it has been developing for a considerable period—the inter-relation, almost interpenetration, of the Old and New Testaments. The first essay was *La Transfiguration de Jésus*, comparing the Law promulgated on Mount Sinai with that contained in the command 'Hear ye Him.' In the second article Rev. A.-G. Hebert, S.S.M., worked out the typological identification of the B.V.M. with the 'Daughter of Sion' of the Old Testament; thus, as the editors indicate, showing how devotion to Mary is a fulfilment of the most ancient of traditions, even under the Old Law. The third article in this issue was suggested by the French translation of Fr. Jungmann's monumental work on the Mass. The November issue of the Review contains four essays on the theme *Hospitalité et Charité* which are particularly relevant to our times when, as *La Vie Spirituelle* writes: 'Strangers (including foreigners) cut a wretched figure in the modern world. If they be stateless expatriates they are called "displaced persons" and for the most part they are shut up in concentration camps in the country where they have come. We are far from the evangelical tradition.'

The second part of the November *La Vie Spirituelle* considered the Christian martyrs in Tonkin in 1917 and some Spanish martyrs of 1936.

In connexion with the first-mentioned group, one has only to glance at other reviews of the current quarter to see that martyrdoms in the East are still a very contemporary subject of anguish to the Church. *La Vie Intellectuelle* began in its October number the first of two articles on the development of the missionary effort in China during the present century. *Études* gave pride of place in its October issue to the magnificent profession of faith by a native Chinese priest, J. Tong Che-Tche, in his trial by the Communists last June. This superb document deserves to be made accessible to every Catholic reading public in Christendom. The best comprehensive article I have seen on this development in China was contained in the September issue of *Ecrits de Paris*—*La Grande Épreuve de l'Eglise en Chine*. Though *Ecrits de Paris* is primarily a political review, trenchantly pro-Pétainist and traditionalist, I introduce it to anyone who has not yet come across it as one of the best-written reviews in France since the war. It is not primarily a Catholic review, but it puts to well-deserved shame quite a number of others which claim to be so.

The third issue of *Irénikon*, from the Belgian Benedictines of Amay, continues the astoundingly high standard of erudition and comprehensive survey of world movements throughout the 'separated' Christian Churches. It is almost impossible to know where to start on any issue of *Irénikon*, so specialized and authoritative are its articles and reviews: and it is so concise that one could scarcely give a more compact account of its various themes. For anyone interested in the development of the oecumenical movement this periodical seems indispensable.

Considering now the political articles in the last three months I was somewhat shaken to discover that the first article in *Études* for September was by M. Joseph Folliet, on ways of working for peace with justice. An excellent theme, but the conclusions of M. Folliet (the excellent organizer of the splendid *Semaines Sociales*) verged somewhat towards a variety of 'neutralism': not entirely surprising for those who remember M. Folliet as the amusing Frère Genièvre of the pre-war *Sept* and contemporary *Témoignage Chrétien*. There were all sorts of impeccable suggestions for study and vague counsels for possible activities for French Catholics. But there was no mention of what I think is pre-eminently the work of charity to which all French Catholics ought to be devoting their efforts—the relief of the wretched Catholics who are lying in the revolting gaols of the Fourth Republic, where they have been consigned by the vicious action of the Communist-Socialist *épuration*—these latter frequently operating through their puppets the M.R.P. And that action has not been sufficiently denounced—if at all—by M. Folliet and his friends. (In this connexion I note with considerable satisfaction the disappearance, owing to lack of funds and readers, of the M.R.P. daily, *l'Aube*, during the period under review. A few other similarly *chèvre-chou* papers could go the same way without

loss to Catholic vitality in France.) The same issue of *Études* contained a chapter of M. Adrien Dansette's recent book on the history of Catholicism during the Third Republic. (M. Dansette wrote on another period of that Republic in the October *Vie Intellectuelle*.) M. Dansette's authority as a historian is familiar to those who have read his valuable *Histoire de la Libération de Paris*. In his recent book he seems to sustain the thesis that the only durable victories won by Catholics during the Third Republic were achieved by the 'liberal' Catholics, following the *Ralliement*; and of these the M.R.P. are the spiritual heirs. It is a fashionable thesis, but one which seems to me increasingly suspect, especially since M. Havard de la Montagne's brilliant *Histoire de la Démocratie Chrétienne*, published in 1948.

In the October issues of *Études* and *La Vie Intellectuelle* there were also excellent documents on the Montpellier *Semaine Sociale* this summer. The same issue of the latter review had a fine piece on the financial aspects of the problem of reconstruction in France by M. Parès, who has already contributed some valuable studies of this question during the current year.

Among the recent literary articles *Études* was prominent with a study of Jean-Paul Sartre's play *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* and a review by M. Barjon of the *Correspondance* between M. Claudel and André Suarès. This is the third such volume of M. Claudel's correspondence with famous contemporaries published of recent years. They are certainly of intense interest to specialists on Claudel or the other protagonists; but one reads each succeeding volume with less general interest. The first of them was that with André Gide; and the Paris wits promptly dubbed both gentlemen *les vrais monnayeurs*, with perhaps legitimate malice. Incidentally, the last quarter has also seen the publication of a posthumous work by André Gide—*Et Nunc Manet in Te*—devoted to the history of his marriage; this seems to have reduced even Gide's Catholic admirers to embarrassed silence, if somewhat tardily. In the July-August *Études* the polyglot taste of M. Robert Bosc offered an interesting study of post-war Soviet novels which was more informative and refreshing than most of the speeches of the political leaders or the commentaries of economists. His conclusion is worth quoting. 'Don't let us be deceived by the words (i.e. the terminology of these Russian writings): Soviet humanism is not purely pagan and self-centred. It is to some degree messianic and eschatological; it contains a disquietude, an expectation. Only Christians can understand intimately that disquietude and that expectation. What new St. Paul will understand how to announce to these men, bent under the yoke of a law which cannot save them, the liberating Good Tidings?'

FRANK MACMILLAN

## GERMAN REVIEWS

WALTER DIRKS' article 'Christendom and Europe' in the September *Frankfurter Hefte* should do much to dispel any remaining illusions about the prospects of reuniting Europe on the basis of Christian principles. He recalls the thrill with which he and other young Germans in the twenties looked for the fulfilment of Novalis' prophecy of the renewal of Christendom and of a European council through which Christianity would spread to the world. 'Europe will be Christian or it will not be' was a challenge to their evangelical fervour which they gladly accepted; but some remembered Donoso Cortes' less optimistic expression of the same opinion: 'Europe will no longer be Christian, and therefore it will no longer be'. Today, although there are some who cling to the old illusion, it is clear to most people that a Christian Europe is impossible in our time: 'Europe may consist of nothing but devout Catholics in two hundred years—within the next twenty years it will most probably be made up of Christians, agnostics, unbelievers, liberals, socialists, communists and so on.' Are we to build up Europe with the materials to hand or—as the Portuguese are reported to be doing—turn away from the task until our continent has purged away all traces of the Reformation, the French Revolution, liberalism and Marxism? Just so does Schumacher refuse to work for a united Europe which is not socialist; so too might enthusiastic esperantists abandon Europe until all its inhabitants speak Esperanto.

The introduction of a Christian motive for political union is not only a counsel of despair, it is dangerous doctrine. There is a way of looking to the divine King and Judge as the source of a supra-national unity which easily leads to the assumption of control over the dispositions of the Holy Ghost. 'God wills it' was very readily invoked in the Middle Ages to justify the ways of those who held the power. It is very natural to think that Europe would be happier and more at peace if all its inhabitants were Christian, as indeed it would if they were whole-hearted and enlightened Christians; but 'Baptism secures us neither against political error nor against political crime'.

We might well bear in mind that whole provinces have been lost to the faith without the faith itself perishing and that other places besides Europe have been providentially designed for the propagation of the Gospel: Jerusalem long ago and Asia Minor, all the lands to which the white races migrated at a later date.<sup>1</sup>

Not that any kind of a united Europe is desirable; otherwise we might have submitted to Hitler's plans. But we have to reckon with contradictory tendencies which have emerged from the course of

<sup>1</sup> Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn's reflections in the August *Schweizer Rundschau* may help also in the formation of a more balanced view: 'The true America is not at all so bad: a transplanted piece of Western Europe, with all our problems, our cares and crimes, our longings and nearly extinguished hopes.'

European history and, before we can entirely resolve the contradictions, collaborate with the individuals by whom they are represented and who are indeed present-day Europe. We hope that they or their descendants will one day accept Christianity, but meanwhile 'Christian Europe' as a political conception is a misinterpretation of the real and sabotage of the possible Europe.'

Another aspect of the same problem is considered by Curt Hohoff who writes on 'The Weakness of Christian Literature' in the *Rheinischer Merkur* of 14 September. For a long time the language of Christianity has been different from that which is normally spoken and, being thus remote from reality, can scarcely belong to a literature that is significant: 'devotion', 'piety', 'virtue', 'salvation', are terms used in the religious lesson or by old women; they have disappeared from daily life. Christian writers may occupy themselves with a strictly limited sphere—in which they may be highly successful, as Graham Greene is when he describes priests and others for whom Christian theology speaks of realities—but they cannot cope with the life of the twentieth century as a whole. The hope of Christian literature lies in its embodiment of tradition in forms attractive to the intellectuals who are turning with interest to the Christian reality. In this respect Gerard Manley Hopkins—Hohoff quotes the last lines of 'God's Grandeur'—and Konrad Weiss—who died ten years ago—are shown to be as perfect in their expression as the most brilliant of the nihilists and infinitely richer in their content, all the truth of Christianity and of the natural world elevated by it.

It is surprising that Hohoff does not mention Werner Bergengruen, certainly an outstanding Christian writer of our time and perhaps more successful in delivering the full Christian message in current literary forms than any other living German. That seems to be the opinion of Theodorich Kampmann, who has written in the October *Hochland* a most illuminating article on 'The World of Werner Bergengruen'. His world is, in fact, the whole universe. 'In Heaven as on Earth' is the title of a novel recently published, but written in the years between 1931 and 1940, and it indicates the extent of his interests and the richness of his material; in the same novel, in the words of the hero, he describes his own sources: 'I see more clearly from day to day that it is not fitting to want to learn from what has been excogitated and asserted. I want to learn from the living, from that which really is and really has been. Therefore I turn my eyes to history and to nature.' In this novel of the sixteenth-century Brandenburg court he deals with the problem of fear, emphasized by the existentialists (their term is *Angst*, but Kampmann speaks of *Furcht*) but always the concern of serious thinkers: there is a fearlessness which arises from excessive vitality and there is the fearlessness of the cultured sceptic; the hero of this novel is shown as overcoming fear by accepting danger as the gift of Omniscient Love, standing behind all the catastrophes of mankind. This is a novel, and indeed

a lengthy novel running to nearly 700 pages, but Bergengruen is essentially a story-teller and in the tradition of Boccaccio—'the most important story-teller in Germany today'. The story brings out as no other literary form does the dependence of man on chance—its development arises from a doctor's error, a telephone conversation overheard—but the Christian story-teller must bring these chance events into a higher order. Here, too, and in lyrics which seem to me as perfect as the poetry of Konrad Weiss, Bergengruen shows that Christian literature is not as weak as we might have feared.

This number of *Hochland* contains an interesting and informative account of the problems of the Catholic Press in Germany by Otto B. Roegele (who is Editor-in-Chief of the *Rheinischer Merkur*). To a large extent the problems are those of the Press as a whole: there is no newspaper today comparable to the leading dailies of the twenties in either influence or quality. On the one hand, the rising costs make it impossible to produce a completely independent newspaper with a circulation of less than 8,000 (in 1932 eighty per cent of German dailies had a circulation of less than 5,000); on the other hand, with the radio relieving him of the effort of reading the news and the imperative need to grasp events in pictures—stimulated by the films, but perhaps also due to long neglect of this impulse in the 'rationalist age'—the ordinary man is disinclined to take a national daily. Local papers are still read, however, and there is considerable interest in the more serious weeklies and monthlies; in these latter the information is better tested, editorials are the fruit of longer reflexion, and the effort of reading can be spread out.

The Catholic papers suffer particularly through their limited circulation and the higher costs of production. Even before Hitler, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* had a church bell struck to celebrate the advent of its 20,000th subscriber; *Germania* never had as many as 10,000 subscribers. The greater part of these papers were organs of the Centre party and—since the Centre was largely identical with the politically active section of German Catholicism—were unmistakably Catholic. That cannot be said of the papers supported by C.D.U., since this party includes considerable numbers of Protestants as well as Catholics. Roegele comes to the conclusion that it is best to proceed slowly. The secular Press is far more favourable to the Church and to Christianity than it was in the twenties; journalists of standing who are also able to grasp and expound the implications of Catholicism are few in number; instead of investing large sums of money in a daily paper of doubtful quality and still more uncertain influence, it would be best to train capable journalists who at a later stage might bring a fully formed Catholic outlook to bear upon the problems of the day.

To the October issue of *German Life and Letters* (Blackwell, Oxford) Sylvia Jenkins contributes a 'literary study' of the Oberammergau Passion Play which she shows to be based mainly on two sources, a late mediaeval mystery play and a sixteenth-century Passion play. From

this it is clear that the play itself is a literary work, if a somewhat patchy one, and not the creation of the people of Oberammergau. They are responsible for its adaptation and presentation, but it is 'their consistency of purpose' which largely makes up for its literary defects and together with the greatness of the theme secures its continued life.

The celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the great publishing house of Herder in Freiburg has already been mentioned in this commentary, but mention must be made of the special supplement to *Herder-Korrespondenz* which appeared in September and which gives a full and very readable account of the way in which most of the important Catholic works on every topic were produced in Germany from 1801 to the present day. It is, for the period, a succinct intellectual history of Catholic Germany.

EDWARD QUINN

### SPANISH REVIEWS

FOREIGN lovers of Spain have plenty of temptation to stick to the romantic *España de pandereta* or to the glorious past. There are thorny places elsewhere. American, French and Italian Catholics have objected now and again to the limitations imposed upon the tiny minority of Protestants in Spain, who are forbidden to proselytize. *Razón y Fe*, the Jesuit review, is intransigent upon this point, and opposes in detail any tendency towards theories, such as have appeared in *Esprit* and other journals, of the 'lay state' as a modern and Catholic solution of the problem of the relations between ecclesiastical and civil authority: all liberalism of this kind is at the best an evil to be tolerated, as is clear from the Fathers and from Papal Encyclicals; in Spain there is no need for it, and no excuse in reason for adopting measures which would only foster its growth. The state's duty is to protect the true religion; this is what it does in Spain.

This thesis is argued in recent articles by Fr. E. Guerrero. The desire is to be left in peace to make of Spain an island of sanity and Catholicity. So Fr. J. A. de Sobrino, visiting the Washington Conference on World Brotherhood, observes this spiritual gathering with detachment and Spanish irony (February 1951). The tables are neatly turned. It is all like a *New Yorker* writer—but minus the insipidity and frivolity—telling you about those funny Latins. In conclusion, he reflects that many of the problems discussed, such as racial problems, do not in any case affect Spain; for the rest, he agrees that Spain is isolated, and must find ways of working with other peoples: but not by mixing light and darkness into this foolish grey.

What one misses is any attempt to tackle the last question in a positive way. Fr. Guerrero, for example, simply brushes aside the obvious objection that a Protestant state, taking its cue from Spain, could hold itself justified in denying liberty to Catholics. His grounds

are that in our day there does not exist any such genuinely Protestant state; an argument worse than useless to an English or French Catholic trying to obtain justice over the schools question. Considerations of this and of a wider kind have evidently influenced Dr. J. B. Manyá in an article published in *Documentos* No. 6 (*Conversaciones Católicas Internacionales de San Sebastián*), which is separately dealt with in a later issue of *Razón y Fe* (June 1951) by Fr. Guerrero. Dr. Manyá has made the general point that Spain is bringing odium upon the Church in the world at large. The answer is in part like this: it is questionable whether modern people really do hate state maintenance of religious inequalities, for evidently this is not the case in Russia, nor in Sweden and Norway, nor even in England and the U.S.A., where Catholics still suffer certain civil disabilities. Where, then, is the odium? Only in the minds of a few individuals and isolated groups of theorists, and especially of a few naïve persons, mainly French, who think world conversion would immediately follow a change of Spanish policy in this matter.

There we must leave the discussion, axle-deep. We must also pass by a fierce controversy over the philosophy of Ortega and an interesting paper by Fr. J. Granero on disquiet of conscience in young practising Catholics (he traces it to childish predispositions and to a too formal and insufficiently evangelical religious training, with an excessive emphasis on fear) in order to glance at two articles dealing with economic and social matters. Fr. M. Brugarola gives a brief general survey of industry in the March 1951 number. Drought, wars and lack of capital, impeding the importation of machinery, have all caused severe difficulties. The production of coal declined after 1945; in 1950 ten out of forty-seven gas plants were idle for lack of fuel. Shortage of electricity is gradually being overcome. Small beginnings are being made with the home manufacture of machine tools, lorries and tractors, and with the provision of technical schools. Bureaucratic control of raw materials is excessive and needs to be reduced.

In the February issue Fr. F. del Valle reviews conditions in the port and fishing centre of Vigo and its environs, in Galicia; a region which has undergone considerable industrial expansion during the present century. His tale is largely a sad one of the catastrophic disappearance of the sardine shoals and of the inadequate pay of workers engaged in the (quite flourishing) deep-sea fishing industry; of poverty, abandoned children, lack of sufficient schools, and renewed emigration, usually to failure in South America. Charitable organizations do what they can, but it is not enough. The Church still has a particularly hard task before it in this region. A general estimate of 10 per cent attendance at Sunday Mass is given for the fishing population; the industrial districts do not come up to this. Churches are relatively few and small, parishes often very extensive. Spain as a whole, it should be added, is experiencing a steady religious revival, and there appear to be hopes of its taking hold even in black spots like Vigo. The *Apostolado Social Católico* is trying to

seek out the men, who are apathetic and anti-clerical, by carrying apologetics into the factories.

*Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* is a bi-monthly review founded four years ago by Pedro Laín Entralgo. It covers letters, art and thought and seeks to be at once *avant-garde* and, in a wide sense, traditional. The March-April issue, for example, contains a characteristic discussion by Gabriel Marcel of the situation of the philosopher in the modern world and some notes of Antonio Machado on Spanish culture, made during the period 1912-1924. Machado, who died in 1939, was a poet and a firm left-winger. There is something of a cult of his poetry at present. Slight enough, if one places it beside the works of greater men, it has a simplicity of form and movement that appeals to the latest school, and draws upon personal grief, nostalgia, and a homely patriotism. His prose notes and essays show an acute mind, with a marked tendency to the bitterness and impatience with ordinary Spanish society that was fashionable among some intellectuals of his day. A sample from these notes: 'Don Juan is to love what the Spaniard is to culture, to wit: a barbarian, an *X* pregnant with a mysterious future.' One comes across far less of this sort of thing nowadays.

Recent numbers of *Arbor* have been much concerned with science. The June issue is a symposium on modern theories of evolution, by Spanish, English and German specialists. In the April number J. López Ibor writes on the latest biological speculations about man. In the July-August issue F. A. Hayek surveys the influence of Comte and Hegel on social theory in an article published simultaneously in *Measure* (Chicago).

Rafael Gamba writes notes on the traditionalist and monarchist Vázquez de Mella in the July-August number. Mella, in opposition to rationalist socialism and individualism, tried to base an organic-corporative theory of society upon the forces that once fed Carlism as a popular movement, and is said here to have anticipated contemporary personalism in making the state secondary to the historical and always developing man of flesh and blood. Mella belongs to the period of the 'generation of '98', which had seen the defeat of Carlism, and of which Unamuno was the greatest representative. This generation, as it is called, was a miscellaneous collection of writers—Mella is not counted among them—whose ideas and attitudes still deeply influence most of the accounts of Spain one comes across. From Señor Gamba's description of Mella, who is scarcely known at all outside Spain, one feels that an Unamuno—though a much greater writer—is really very like a Mella strangely transformed by being dipped in a vat of foreign *fin-de-siècle* intellectualism: patriotic and a great lover of tradition, but desperate, profoundly subjective, existentialist, wishing to be heretical and orthodox at once, much influenced by Kierkegaard; and thus more reputable in the world at large.

T. E. MAY

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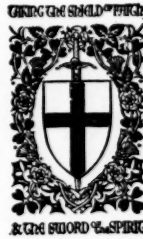
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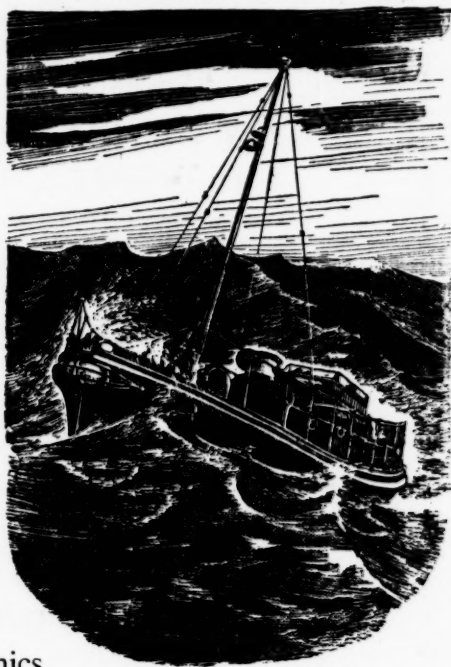
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